

# The Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Group

A case study of government and non-government organisations aligning policy and resources towards an Aboriginal community-led agenda

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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**

Sydney Policy Lab

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# Contents

The Sydney Policy Lab acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognises their ongoing connections to land, sea and community. The work to create this document was in large part conducted on the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, and is particular indebted to the knowledge and practice of the Bourke Tribal Council. All involved pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the continuation of cultural, spiritual, and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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# Foreword



**Alistair Ferguson**

Maranguka Executive Director and Founder

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**Maranguka, meaning ‘caring for others’ in the local Ngemba language, is a unique expression of self-determination and Cultural Authority from the Bourke Tribal Council.**

It has developed over many years and is a journey that the Bourke community is on together. Maranguka builds on our local community’s engagement over many years with a variety of NSW Government policy initiatives and draws on expertise and knowledge from researchers and other Indigenous communities around the world. Maranguka is using a collective impact framework to implement the Bourke Tribal Council’s *Growing Our Kids Up Safe Smart and Strong* strategy, aiming to change the way that services are provided to the local community. In this work, the Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Group and Executive are very important for building relationships, exploring difficulties and creating shared accountability between the Bourke Tribal Council, government and non-government organisations. I hope that this case study can support the important work of the Maranguka CSLG, and also provide useful insights for other communities, governments and NGOs that want to get behind local leadership and support a community-led agenda for change.



**Teya Dusseldorp**

Dusseldorp Forum Executive Director

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**Dusseldorp Forum’s approach to philanthropy involves forging long-term partnerships with place-based and community-led initiatives, such as Maranguka, that work strategically to improve health, education and social outcomes for children and families.**

We first partnered with Maranguka in 2013, and our current commitment will take our relationship through to 2024. Outside of financial support, our team supports local capacity building through professional development and mentoring, as well as collaborating with governments, not-for-profits, corporates, philanthropy and the community on systemic reforms that can support better futures for the children and families of Bourke. A unifying theme in these collaborations is that improving outcomes for children in Bourke requires the leadership, intelligence and buy-in of the community. The Cross Sector Leadership Group provides the structure for government and other stakeholders to work together, as partners, with the community to drive this positive change.



### **Brad Hazzard MP**

NSW Minister for Health and Medical Research  
Ministerial Champion for the Bourke Community and Maranguka

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**It is long past time that governments meet First Nations people on Country and on their terms. Maranguka has done things differently, empowering the Bourke community to raise important issues across housing, justice, healthcare and education directly with the senior levels of government.**

I am confident we will continue to improve outcomes for Aboriginal communities through the Maranguka model, and by acknowledging the unique knowledge of local Aboriginal community leaders.

I thank the Bourke Tribal Council, Maranguka Executive Director and Founder Alistair Ferguson, Dusseldorp Forum Executive Director Teya Dusseldorp, Chair of Just Reinvest NSW Sarah Hopkins and all other Maranguka partners for their willingness to work with the NSW Government on what is one of the most critical issues of our generation. It was a privilege to be first appointed as Ministerial Champion in early 2015. As part of the Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Group my role is to listen first, respecting the leadership and expertise of Aboriginal elders and the Bourke Tribal Council, and to remove barriers to change within the government.

This case study highlights lessons for all of us, how we can learn from the development and success of Maranguka to date and apply these insights to other locations and new challenges as they arise. I would like to single out the Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative for its support of the Maranguka Justice Reinvestment project. With the support of both the Australian and NSW governments, this important work has already demonstrated positive cultural, social and economic wellbeing impacts for Aboriginal people in Bourke. Efforts to address violence, incarceration and school retention rates are a long-term project.

I will continue to strongly support the work of Maranguka, driven by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people.



# 60 Second Summary



*It's the most effective demonstration of governments organising to get behind or wrap around a community-led change agenda that I know of.*

**Tara Day-Williams** – Director,  
Stronger Places Stronger People

This case study draws on the knowledge and practice of the Bourke Tribal Council through Maranguka, a community-led initiative based in the town of Bourke in Western NSW, which “is a grassroots vision for improving outcomes and creating better coordinated support for vulnerable families and children through the true empowerment of the local Aboriginal community”.<sup>1</sup>

The document was prepared by the Sydney Policy Lab at the University of Sydney and is in particular indebted to the participation of Maranguka Executive Director and Founder, Alistair Ferguson.

A previously unexplored aspect of Maranguka is the Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Group (CSLG), a key site of interaction and direct engagement between local Aboriginal community leadership and government and non-government organisations. The evolution and story of the Maranguka CSLG offers important lessons for those wishing to support and respond to Aboriginal community leadership – including politicians, government agencies, philanthropists, and service providers.

These lessons centre around four key factors:

- (1) strong **community leadership** to which other partners align their activities;
- (2) the commitment, time and skills required to engage in **deep collaboration** and build trust around a common purpose;
- (3) the importance of **authorisation**, including the need to respect Cultural Authority, and the role of political leaders in giving ‘permission’ to act; and
- (4) different levels of **accountability**, formalised through milestone documents, structures and processes which lay the groundwork and tone for future activity.

While these lessons emerged from the specific context of the Maranguka initiative in Bourke led by the Bourke Tribal Council, they offer potential insights for other government and non-government organisations wishing to align policy and resources towards supporting community-led agendas for change.

<sup>1</sup> From the Maranguka Community Hub [website](#).

# Executive Summary

This case study has been created to support the work of the Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Group (CSLG) and provide potential insights for other government and non-government organisations looking to align policy and resources behind a community-led agenda.

The Maranguka CSLG, and the smaller Executive (CSLE) that formed out of it, are formal meeting points for governments, non-government organisations, philanthropists and service providers that are working to support the Bourke Tribal Council's *Growing Our Kids Up Safe, Smart and Strong* strategy. This strategy is operationalised using a collective impact framework on the ground in Bourke through the Maranguka Community Hub and takes a whole of life approach to improving outcomes for children and families.

Drawing on the knowledge and practice of the Bourke Tribal Council, particularly through the involvement of Maranguka Founder and Executive Director Alistair Ferguson, this document highlights five key moments in the evolution of the Maranguka CSLG and CSLE, outlines four factors which have contributed to its successes, and then identifies five challenges that CSLE members are facing as they work together to support the community's aspirations.

## KEY MOMENTS

The Maranguka CSLG has evolved in many ways since it first met in 2015. These key moments in many ways help to distinguish the Maranguka CSLG from other ways that government and non-government organisations interact with community-led initiatives.

- (1) **Holding meetings in person:** the Bourke Tribal Council has insisted that the CSLG meet in Bourke whenever possible, and the CSLE aims to hold one of its quarterly meetings in Bourke. For government and non-government organisations, travelling to Bourke is an important sign of respect for the community's leadership and the Cultural Authority of the Bourke Tribal Council.
- (2) **A consistent ministerial champion:** Brad Hazzard became Ministerial Champion for Maranguka when he was Attorney General and has continued in this role following portfolio changes to Family and Community Services and now Health. This has helped retain continuity of authorisation for senior public servants and increased political support Maranguka.
- (3) **Establishing a bilateral CSLE:** Unlike typical government interagency bodies, the CSLE was established to include all stakeholders with resources aligned towards Bourke. Alongside Federal and NSW Government agencies the CSLE includes Maranguka, the Bourke Tribal Council and key non-government partners such as Just Reinvest NSW and Dusseldorp Forum.
- (4) **Establishing the *Maranguka Principles*:** These are agreed ways of working that are intended to be embedded into government and non-government service contracts, aligning organisations to the desired outcomes of the *Safe Smart Strong* strategy, and ensuring that they acknowledge and respect the leadership and Cultural Authority of the Bourke Tribal Council<sup>1</sup>.

1 The Maranguka Principles can be accessed [online here](#).

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## Executive Summary (continued)

- (5) **Creating CSLE sub-groups:** Just as the smaller CSLE was established to progress work between the annual CSLG meetings, four subgroups have been established to progress key areas of work between the quarterly CSLE meetings. They work on: creating the accountability framework; embedding the *Maranguka Principles*; mapping services and investment in Bourke; and identifying ways to broker solutions in the current system.

### FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

Through the in-depth interviews and documentation review conducted for this case study, four clear themes emerged which together help the Maranguka CSLG align to the community's aspirations.

- (1) **Community Leadership:** The Bourke Tribal Council's *Safe Smart Strong* strategy is the key focal point for the CSLE, providing participants with clarity about what they are working towards. This strong statement of Cultural Authority and self-determination strengthens the local community and makes sure that, as one interviewee noted, the "never-ending cycle of public servants coming in and out of the community" are orientated towards what the community wants.
- (2) **Relationships and Deep Collaboration:** The readiness of the Maranguka CSLG to work towards a community-led agenda has been built over many years. It has required government and non-government partners to work in different ways, have the patience to understand where everyone is coming from, and build the trust required to develop a shared sense of responsibility and act together towards the community's goals.

- (3) **Two-way Accountability:** The Maranguka CSLG is challenging mainstream notions of accountability when it comes to funding. The Bourke Tribal Council is responsible for setting the strategy, the Maranguka Community Hub is responsible for holding the space for collaboration and conversations to occur, while governments and non-government organisations are responsible for aligning their resources towards the community-defined outcomes.
- (4) **Authorisation:** As representatives of the Traditional Custodians of Culture and Country around Bourke, the Bourke Tribal Council hold the pre-eminent position within the authorising environment and have authorised Maranguka to be the interface with government and non-government partners. At the same time, public sector employees require both political and bureaucratic authorisation to work in different ways towards the community's goals.

### LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

**Members of the Maranguka CSLG and CSLE are aware of many of the challenges that they face. In part, this document may support participants in preparing to meeting them.**

- (1) **Changes in personnel:** As the Maranguka CSLG progresses, the individuals who were instrumental in establishing it will move on. Alignment to the *Safe Smart Strong strategy*, formal CSLG documentation and continuing to work relationally will be key.

- (2) **Getting beyond the goodwill:** The hard and crucial work of building the relationships required to create formal documents such as collaboration agreements and the *Maranguka Principles* needs to extend into action and further implementation on the ground.
- (3) **Expanding the network:** Members of the CSLE are conscious of the need to engage new partners inside and outside of government to support the community's *Safe Smart Strong* strategy. This includes deeper connection with health and education organisations.
- (4) **Systems change:** Making the *Safe Smart Strong* strategy work requires governments sharing power and working differently. Non-community members of the CSLG will need to advocate within their broader networks to align hierarchical systems to working in more flexible ways.
- (5) **Self-sufficiency:** As an expression of self-determination and community empowerment, a key aspiration for the Bourke Tribal Council is for their leadership and the benefits they are generating to translate into increased decision-making power over the resources that are aligned towards Bourke.

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# The Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Group

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Maranguka Working Groups in action in Bourke.



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# Introduction



*One of the key answers to the question of, ‘what do you want out of this?’ is a trusted, respectful, and meaningful relationship between community leaders and government. And that’s two-way learning there because, at the moment, you have Aboriginal community leaders rightfully very mistrustful of any of these kinds of processes and reluctant to engage. This kind of structure and development will, hopefully, create that forum where community and government can come together and be a bit of a lighthouse for that.*

**Alistair Ferguson** – Executive Director, Maranguka Community Hub

**The Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Group (CSLG) formed in 2015 in response to the leadership of the Bourke Tribal Council, who had identified the need for service sector reform in their strategy for change: *Growing Our Kids Up Safe, Smart and Strong*.**

The Bourke Tribal Council is made up of representatives from 24 distinct Indigenous Tribes and families living in and around the town of Bourke in remote Western NSW, where a disconnected network of government led services and initiatives had over time failed to systemically reduce crime or increase child wellbeing.

The *Safe Smart Strong* strategy – developed with the support of organisations such as Just Reinvest NSW (a strategic initiative of the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT) and funding from Dusseldorp Forum and the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation – takes a whole of life approach to building community strength through community led local initiatives, systems reform and reducing harmful contact between local young people and the criminal justice. The primary vehicle for delivering this strategy is Maranguka, a community-led justice reinvestment initiative adopting a collective impact framework, which is operationalised via the Maranguka Community Hub, located in the centre of town.

Prior to Maranguka, Bourke made international news headlines due to extremely high crime statistics. Now, media interest in the small community focuses on some of the early impacts of Maranguka: reduced crime, increased community wellbeing, and a different kind of relationship between community, government and service providers.

*Maranguka* is a word that means “caring for others” in the local Ngemba language. Maranguka has been described as a journey that the community is on together, and this idea of collective endeavour that unfolds and develops over time relates equally to the government and non-government partners involved.

Along these lines, developing a new relationship between the Bourke Tribal Council and various levels of government, aligned around the community’s strategy for change, has not been without its challenges. Foremost among these are the impacts on relationships of more than two centuries of institutional and government-led approaches to systemic issues facing the community, including colonisation. Even where goodwill existed, relationships and trust were historically shallow and fragile, requiring an investment of time purely to create the relationships necessary for collaboration. The tradition of government-led solutions also included a bureaucratic framework favouring centralised and uniform policies, practices and procedures. This has created barriers and hurdles to be overcome for those who wanted to work differently, both within and outside government.

Another core challenge is the one facing many other communities, service providers and governments across the globe: how to shift from being reactive, and overly focusing on the crisis end of a system, to responding to the aspirations of community which, if not addressed, push people into crisis. In the context of Bourke, this shift is away from a punitive police and justice system, along with disconnection amongst primary service providers, to an interconnected approach to improving outcomes around health, education, wellbeing, housing and employment, while ensuring wrap around support for people and families in times of crisis.

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## Introduction (continued)

According to Maranguka Executive Director Alistair Ferguson, the problem with the traditional approach to service delivery and the challenges facing communities is that “we’ve been picking up the pieces after people have gone over the cliff.” In the process of transitioning to a different way of working, steering people away from the cliff in the first place, Ferguson highlights how important it is to understand that building community strength and resilience will not erase the bad days. He notes that there will always be spikes in crime and unique circumstances that arise in communities, along with pressures from external factors such as drought, bushfires or the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, the new approach needs to “create a story around those bad days which, instead of catastrophising it, is us asking ourselves: how do we respond to that? How do we deal with that?”

Maranguka is an important part of the Bourke Tribal Council’s response to these questions. Substantive multiyear philanthropic funding support for Maranguka began in 2014, alongside in-kind support from various government agencies and not-for-profit organisations. In 2019, Maranguka secured multiyear Federal and NSW Government support through the Stronger Places Stronger People program, a bilateral agreement which across 2019–2024 will invest \$1.5million from the Commonwealth plus an additional \$360,000 for capacity building. This has been matched by \$1.58million over the five years plus in-kind support from the NSW Government. The focal point for this investment is the implementation of the community’s *Safe Smart Strong* strategy and, as Dusseldorp Forum Executive Director Teya Dusseldorp notes in her foreword on page 3, “the Cross Sector Leadership Group provides the structure for government and other stakeholders to work together, as partners, with the community to drive this positive change.”



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Alistair Ferguson and Vivienne Prince from Maranguka, with Police Superintendent Greg Moore, sharing their collaborative approach at the Festival of Change 2018.

# The Maranguka CSLG and CSLE

**The Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Group (CSLG), and the smaller Cross Sector Leadership Executive (CSLE), are crucial sites of interaction and connection between the Bourke Tribal Council and the NSW Government.**

While on the surface, the aims of the community and government appear the same – a safe and strong local community in Bourke – ideas around how this can best be achieved can vary greatly. Community members, government agencies and service providers all come to the table from different perspectives, with different expectations, and often with different ways of talking about the same issues. With the focal point of the community's *Safe Smart Strong* strategy, the Maranguka CSLG and CSLE are an important site to explore these differences, for relationships and trust to grow, and for collaborations to form around new initiatives which support the community's agenda, including opportunities for systemic change that can remove bureaucratic hurdles.

According to the Maranguka CSLE's most recent Terms of Reference,<sup>2</sup> the Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Group "is jointly chaired by Alistair Ferguson, Executive Director and Founder of Maranguka and the Hon. Brad Hazzard MP." The group consists of "senior leaders from all levels of government, non-profits, community groups, philanthropy, business, academia and community." Annual meetings of the CSLG are intended to update those involved with progress on the *Safe Smart Strong* strategy and provide opportunities for aligning support and resources to the community-led agenda strategy.

The Cross Sector Leadership Executive (CSLE) evolved from one of the initial CSLG meetings, with the intention of establishing a smaller group to progress key aspects of work. The CSLE "brings together leaders from community, philanthropy, corporates and all three levels of government" to align resources towards achieving the community's *Safe Smart Strong* Strategy.

This includes identifying and championing potential reforms to funding and other systemic arrangements; developing ways of working that respect Cultural Authority and Cultural Safety; as well as maintaining existing networks and creating new ones to "build social and economic prosperity" for the Bourke community. The current endorsed members of the CSLE include senior representatives with decision-making authorisation from:

- **Bourke Tribal Council:** Maranguka Community Hub, Just Reinvest NSW, Dusseldorp Forum, Association of Child Welfare Agencies (ACWA)
- **NSW State Government:** Department of Regional NSW, Aboriginal Affairs NSW, Department of Education (Bourke High School and Bourke Public School), Department of Communities and Justice (Communities & Justice, Youth Justice), NSW Police (Central North Police District), Western NSW Local Health District, Department of Customer Service
- **Federal Government:** Department of Social Services (Stronger Places, Stronger People), Department of Education, Skills and Employment (Connected Beginnings), National Indigenous Australians Agency
- **Broader NGO sector:** Catholic Care Wilcannia-Forbes

<sup>2</sup> Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Executive, *Terms of Reference* – endorsed 17 September 2021. From the combined business papers of the September 2021 CSLE meeting, pp.5-10.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE CROSS SECTOR LEADERSHIP GROUP AND EXECUTIVE

**Bourke Tribal Council (BTC)**

Community Leadership. Developed the *Safe Smart Strong* Strategy, operationalised through Maranguka.

**Cross Sector Leadership Executive Subgroups**

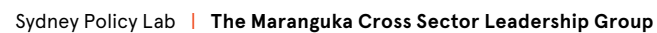
Working in key areas between Cross Sector Leadership Executive (CSLE) meetings, reports to CSLE.

**Cross Sector Leadership Executive (CSLE)**

Quarterly meetings of organisations with resources aligned towards Bourke, working to make *Safe Smart Strong* Strategy happen.

**Cross Sector Leadership Group (CSLG)**

Annual gathering of those supporting Bourke, convened by Maranguka and the Ministerial Champion.





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## The Maranguka CSLG and CSLE (continued)

The Maranguka CSLE meets at least four times per year, with at least one of those meetings occurring on Country in Bourke to engage directly with members of the Bourke Tribal Council. Outside of CSLE meetings, members who are closer to the community, for example Maranguka Community Hub and non-government support organisations Dusseldorp Forum and Just Reinvest NSW, are more directly accountable to and draw direct authorisation from the Bourke Tribal Council. For the various government agencies, an important equivalent within government which authorises them to work towards the community-led agenda comes from two Executive Sponsors: Minister Brad Hazzard and Secretary of Regional NSW Gary Barnes.

In October 2020, the Maranguka CSLE endorsed a proposal to establish four sub-groups to further advance key aspects of the work in-between the quarterly meetings. Each CSLE member is expected to participate in one of the four groups, which are currently working on:

- (1) developing a joint accountability framework between the Bourke Tribal Council and the NSW Government;
- (2) embedding *Maranguka Principles* into government and non-government service contracts for providers funded to work in Bourke, for how they should work towards implementing the *Safe Smart Strong* strategy;
- (3) mapping the service and investment landscape operating in Bourke; and
- (4) identifying systemic issues and blockages amongst organisations working in Bourke for the CSLG and CSLE to collectively address.

Over time, interactions between members of the Maranguka CSLG and CSLE are helping to change the approach in Bourke to those inevitable “bad days”, as Alistair Ferguson calls them, as well as to other emerging crises and how long term planning is done. The story of community and government is changing from immediate individual reactions to considered collective responses. At a local level, this principle can be seen in the daily check-ins at the Maranguka Community Hub between local police, NGOs and other service providers. The collective Maranguka solution to high levels of traffic offences wasn’t to increase fines or lock people up, it was introducing a free driving lesson and licensing initiative. Concerns about having no maternity ward at the local hospital were met by a whole of community Welcome Babies to Bourke initiative, where all new Indigenous and non-Indigenous parents and children came together to form a connection to Country, Culture and Community guided by local Elders.

The new story that the Bourke Tribal Council is championing is that when challenges arise, rather than reacting alone, people and organisations involved at all levels of Maranguka talk to each other about a response that best aligns with the community’s aspirations, articulated through the *Growing Our Kids Up Safe Smart Strong* strategy. Over time, the Maranguka CSLG and CSLE have become a space for relationship building and negotiation around achieving the community’s broad goals.

The CSLG and CSLE bring together the Cultural Authority of the Bourke Tribal Council and the community’s aspirations for self-determination with the significant financial and structural resources of the NSW Government and other non-government partners. Thus, the CSLG and CSLE serve as an essential interface between community leadership and governance, working towards Alistair Ferguson’s goal of “a trusted, respectful, and meaningful relationship between community leaders and government.”

# Key Moments

**All journeys have significant moments or turning points, serving as markers for changes in direction, activity or relationships. Three such landmarks for the Bourke community are establishing the Bourke Tribal Council, the *Growing Our Kids Up Safe Smart Strong* strategy, and the Maranguka Community Hub.**

All three of these developed over time in different ways, and are still developing and evolving as circumstances change. Each has milestones, landmarks and significant events of their own. This is true too of the Cross Sector Leadership Group and Executive, which have evolved and changed over time, and will continue to.

Five key moments in the evolution of the relationship between the Bourke Tribal Council and the NSW Government are:

- (1) the decision to hold CSLG meetings in person, and where possible in Bourke;
- (2) the continuity of authorisation from Brad Hazzard across changes of Ministerial portfolios;
- (3) establishing a bilateral CSLE with representatives from both government and non-government organisations;
- (4) CSLE agreement on the *Maranguka Principles*; and
- (5) the formation of CSLE sub-groups to advance aspects of the work.

These are explored in brief below.

## **(1) HOLDING CSLG MEETINGS IN PERSON IN BOURKE**

From the very beginning, the Bourke Tribal Council has insisted that the Maranguka CSLG meet in person and where possible in Bourke. As Alistair Ferguson notes, “we have to come to Bourke to meet with them on their land, on Country.” For government and non-government organisations wanting to support the

*Safe Smart Strong* strategy, travelling to Bourke is an important sign of respect for the community’s leadership and the Cultural Authority of the Bourke Tribal Council. The 2017 and 2019 CLSG meetings were held in Dubbo, the closest large town. This practice has extended to the smaller CLSE, since 2019, at least one of the CSLE’s quarterly meetings has been held on Country in Bourke.

Local Police, in particular former Local Area Commander Greg Moore, and Department of Family and Community Services employees strongly supported the community’s leadership and the establishment of the Maranguka Community Hub and the initial Maranguka CSLG, which consisted of the Bourke Tribal Council along with 50–60 senior representatives from government agencies and non-government organisations.

## **(2) AUTHORISATION FROM MINISTER BRAD HAZZARD**

Brad Hazzard officially became a Ministerial Champion for the Bourke community and Maranguka in early 2015, when he was the NSW Attorney General and Minister for Justice. Alistair Ferguson from the Bourke Tribal Council and Sarah Hopkins from Just Reinvest NSW had been developing a relationship with Minister Hazzard for over a year. The NSW Premier agreed for Minister Hazzard to maintain the formal relationship with Maranguka following his shift to becoming Minister of Family and Community Services in mid 2015, and then Minister for Health from early 2017. As Minister Hazzard stated on the ABC Four Corners program in 2016:

*We’re backing them with the gathering of data but also looking at how we might use all that money which currently goes into Bourke in a better and more effective way. I think it’s actually beyond politics.*

## Key Moments (continued)

*Generally, across Australia there is an earnest willing energy about trying to do something different. They're just not sure what it is. We've had a couple of hundred years of complete failure. And how we now approach the experiment in Bourke is important across Australia. Australia will be watching.*

**Brad Hazzard** – then NSW Minister for Family and Community Services

The senior NSW Government figure's continuity of connection with and support for Maranguka is regarded as extremely important both for building political support for the community-led agenda amongst his political colleagues, as well as providing the political authorisation for senior public sector employees to go beyond the strictures of established policy and procedure. At a crucial point in a 2019 CSLG meeting in Dubbo, Minister Brad Hazzard publicly shifted the onus of accountability from community to government. This action authorised the public servants involved to work in a different way, one that was more in line with how the Bourke Tribal Council wanted to work. Another outcome of this meeting was the formation of the Cross Sector Leadership Executive.

### (3) ESTABLISHING A BILATERAL CSLE:

Prior to Minister Hazzard's intervention and the establishment of the CSLE, the broad position from NSW Government representatives was that Maranguka should work through government-established and -led initiatives such as the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly and Local Decision Making (LDM). However, the Bourke Tribal Council insisted on a different type of interaction between the community and government. They regarded that their locally customised collective impact and justice

reinvestment framework – while incorporating elements of and sitting alongside human rights frameworks like the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or government initiatives such as Closing the Gap, OCHRE and LDM – was a unique expression of self-determination and Cultural Authority that the Bourke community was inviting government and non-government partners to support and work towards.

Even after the Minister's intervention, the NSW Government's original conception for the CSLE was that it should involve only senior representatives of the various NSW Government agencies working within Bourke and focus on internal discussions of how the activity of government agencies might interact with Maranguka, a conception which is consistent with how government interagencies have typically worked. However, after discussion with Maranguka and Just Reinvest NSW, it was agreed that the CSLE would include Maranguka, Just Reinvest NSW, philanthropist Dusseldorp Forum and the NSW Ombudsman. This broader participation has ensured ongoing alignment to the community's strategy through information sharing and relationship building around important questions relating to accountability and implementation.

### (4) FORMALISING THE MARANGUKA PRINCIPLES:

A long-standing request from the Bourke Tribal Council has been to embed principles within service contracts for government and non-government agencies which align those working in Bourke with the community's *Safe Smart Strong* strategy. From the community's perspective, this request emerges from the responsibility that those outside of the community who want to support Maranguka and the *Safe Smart Strong* strategy, have to acknowledge and respect the leadership and Cultural Authority of the Bourke

Tribal Council. This can be a challenging mindset shift for funders, such as governments and philanthropists, which are often more accustomed to imposing activity types, accountability frameworks and ways of working on the organisations which they fund, not the other way around.

After a series of discussions between the CSLE and the Bourke Tribal Council, the *Maranguka Principles* were agreed to by all members of the Maranguka CSLE in October 2020. These 12 principles focus on creating a trusting, respectful and collaborative environment in Bourke, including by “working in ways that are culturally competent, ensure cultural safety and recognise the cultural, spiritual, economic and physical connections that exist in the Bourke Aboriginal community.”<sup>3</sup>

Measures for doing this include embedding the principles into service contracts, supporting the development of an Aboriginal employment and procurement strategy for Bourke, sharing data, and building “the capacity of local Bourke Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to support self-determination.” Since formalisation in the CSLE, the *Maranguka Principles* have been endorsed by the NSW Government Social Policy Senior Officers Group and at time of writing are being prepared for presentation to the NSW Government Secretaries Board.

### (5) FORMING SUBGROUPS OF THE CSLE:

The formation of a CSLE from the broader CSLG allowed for progress in a number of areas, particularly in terms of increased awareness and understanding of how different community, government and non-government participants were approaching their engagement with Maranguka. By early 2020 however, as one government contributor noted, the CSLE was collectively struggling with questions such as: “What's our role? How do we move the work forward?”

<sup>3</sup> Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Executive, *Maranguka Principles* – endorsed 17 June 2021. Bourke Tribal Council, government and non-government partners. The Principles can be viewed [online here](#).



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## Key Moments (continued)

### (5) FORMING SUBGROUPS OF THE CSLE: (CONTINUED)

How do we get beyond awareness and understanding to actually taking action that is in support of the community-led initiative?" It was in this context that Department of Regional NSW representatives Ashley Albury and Gerry Collins proposed subgroups which, according to the CSLE Terms of Reference, "drive action on key pieces of work; identify and resolve systemic barriers; and deliver clarity on work ahead."

The creation of these subgroups has allowed for progress to be made in the four key identified areas.<sup>4</sup> The Accountability Framework subgroup has been working on developing a series of collaboration-related indicators which will signal whether the CSLE, Bourke Tribal Council and Maranguka Community Hub are collectively achieving desired structural, relational and transformative changes.

The *Maranguka Principles* subgroup has been working to socialise and embed the *Maranguka Principles* across government agencies operating or funding services in Bourke. The Service Mapping and Investment Group are working through senior levels of the Federal and NSW Governments to collect data about the breadth of government funded activities which impact the Bourke community. Finally, the System Solution Brokerage subgroup have identified the need for additional support workers in the community to work holistically with at-risk families and young people and connect them to specialised services as required.

People on the CSLE stepping up to lead and chair the subgroups are seen as important in terms of shared accountability. As one contributor noted, the subgroups formed out of issues people wanted to work on, "so rather than saying we should, there was a shift to we will."



The Maranguka Community Hub team regularly welcomes visitors that want to learn from what is happening in Bourke.

<sup>4</sup> Content from: Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Executive, *Combined business papers of the June 2021 CSLE meeting*.



# Factors for Success



*"This isn't simple or easy work. It takes tenacity and a commitment to work through the tough times. It's about building strong relationships and learning how to navigate change together."*

**Teya Dusseldorp** – Executive Director, Dusseldorp Forum

**Emerging across the story of the Maranguka CSLG and CSLE are four themes which have contributed to the achievements to date, and which can be expected to form the foundations upon which future successes are built.**

They are:

- (1) the community leadership of the Bourke Tribal Council;
- (2) the importance of relationships and deep collaboration;
- (3) two-way accountability; and
- (4) the authorisation participants have to engage with the CSLE.

While these themes have emerged from the unique circumstances of the Maranguka CSLE, there are likely to be insights relevant to other communities, governments and non-government organisations looking to build partnerships for change around a community led agenda.

## **(1) COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP**

The leadership of Bourke Tribal Council members in developing the *Safe Smart Strong* strategy and creating the ongoing vision for Maranguka cannot be overemphasised. The outcomes from this leadership, particularly as articulated in the *Safe Smart Strong* strategy, are a key focal point for the activities of the CSLE, providing participants with clarity about what they are working towards, something to "anchor back to" as one government contributor noted. This is assisted by the holistic nature of the community's *Safe Smart Strong* strategy, which incorporates factors impacting an individual's life from birth to adulthood. In this way, the overall priorities the Bourke Tribal Council are working towards through Maranguka are not tied to individual policy areas.

Outcomes related to health, justice, housing, employment and education are important, but these themselves are merely indicators for the desired strength and independence for children, young people, adults and families.

Strong community leadership has benefits for everyone involved in the Maranguka CSLE. From an Indigenous point of view, community leadership is an essential component of self-determination, and the process of involving community members in the activities of the Bourke Tribal Council and Maranguka Community Hub develops leadership capacity across the whole community. Governments also benefit from community leadership. Department of Regional NSW Secretary Gary Barnes observed that in his experience working with Aboriginal communities nationwide, "the never-ending cycle of public servants and not-for-profits coming in and out of the community" means that "any model of governance at the end of the day needs to be community-led." Former Bourke Local Area Commander Greg Moore noted how when taking up a position in a new town or region, his approach is to "intentionally build relationships with the community based around an understanding that the community is best suited to identify its problems and guide the police on solutions."

## **(2) RELATIONSHIPS AND DEEP COLLABORATION**

A strong theme running through the story of the Maranguka CSLG and CSLE is how deep collaboration is the result of building relationships over time. Tara Day-Williams from the Department of Social Services, who joined the CSLE in 2019 following Federal Government funding for Maranguka through the Stronger Places Stronger People (SPSP) program, noted how, "when I joined there was such readiness here. There's such a strong foundation that I haven't seen with any other communities that we're supporting through SPSP."

## Executive Summary (continued)

### (2) RELATIONSHIPS AND DEEP COLLABORATION (CONTINUED)

Because each participant in a collaborative endeavour brings their own unique ideas, expectations and ways of expression, it becomes inevitable that time be spent unpacking these and generating mutual respect and understanding. According to Maranguka's Alistair Ferguson, an important part of that readiness comes through having the patience required to get things right:

*We're not forcing that round peg into a square hole. We're waiting for people to find their niche, where they fit, what they have to offer, contribute, et cetera, to the process, and we're allowing it to happen organically.*

**Alistair Ferguson** – Executive Director,  
Maranguka Community Hub

The *Maranguka Principles* endorsed by the CSLE in October 2020 are essentially guidelines for how government and non-government organisations should approach collaborating with the Bourke Tribal Council. This includes creating safe and respectful spaces for conversations to occur, collective decision-making, capacity building within the local community, and working "to create an environment of trust between partners that supports a systems change approach, reform, risk taking and innovative responses to issues." For the ongoing success of the collaboration, formal documentation such as the *Principles* play an important role for new people beginning to engage with the Maranguka CLSE or one of its partner organisations.

### FOUR FACTORS OF SUCCESS



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## Factors for Success (continued)

Sarah Hopkins from Just Reinvest NSW highlighted how a more patient approach to time and collaboration can be a challenge for those from “non-self-determined structures,” whereby governments and non-government participants can approach a collaboration with pre-formed expectations about the pace at which activities occur and how decisions are made. Hopkins noted the tension that exists between the desire to make progress and, “if we’re genuinely operating where we’re backing self-determination, it’s not our call what the timeframes are.” In order for these relationships to work, governments and non-government organisations wanting to partner with the Bourke Tribal Council need to acknowledge the potential differences and tension between how they are used to working and how the local community wants to work. Members of the CSLE have a further responsibility towards helping to create respectful relationships between Maranguka and potential new partners who aren’t currently working closely with Maranguka and the CSLE.

### (3) TWO-WAY ACCOUNTABILITY

As a relationship between the Bourke Tribal Council and the NSW Government, Maranguka has challenged the mainstream notion of accountability when it comes to funding. A common frame around accountability from funders such as government is that the government is providing public resources to a community or service provider and therefore the organisation receiving the funding needs to account for what they are doing with those funds so that the government can ensure the funding is being acquitted responsibly. Conversely, from a community’s point of view, governments have resources which are supposed to be used for the public’s benefit and therefore governments, along with any service providers which governments fund, are accountable to the community.

Part of the role of Federal Government’s Stronger Places Stronger People (SPSP) program within the Maranguka CSLE is exploring measurement and accountability mechanisms that are different from the way that governments usually measure things. The SPSP Progress Mapping Tool captures process metrics relating to equity and power sharing which, according to Tara Day-Williams, “helps people focus on the causes of disadvantage, inequality and poverty, not just the issues as they’re experienced.” The idea of governments being accountable to the community is shared by former Local Area Commander Greg Moore, who noted how the Maranguka daily check-ins between Police, the Maranguka Community Hub team and other local service providers “allowed for accountability to be built on a daily basis.” Along these lines, Moore noted how the history of colonisation and policing made cultural awareness training, such as that run by the Bourke Tribal Council, essential for police.

Two-way accountability situates responsibility within non-hierarchical relationships, operationalised through core strategy and process documents such as the *Safe Smart Strong* strategy, the CSLE Terms of Reference and the *Maranguka Principles*. As part of their accountability to the Bourke Tribal Council, CSLE members take on various responsibilities. For example, Dusseldorp Forum takes on the responsibility of bringing in and coordinating a consortium of philanthropists, while Just Reinvest NSW works to link external champions to Maranguka through advocacy and policy reform. Similarly, Ashley Albury noted the important role played by the Department of Regional NSW, and how “it was really important to have a central agency approach that could almost hold other agencies to account around that table.”

Finally, even though the ultimate accountability and leadership for the CSLE is the Bourke Tribal Council, these community leaders are also accountable to the community, who expect the Tribal Council to hold government to account on the outcomes the community set in the *Safe Smart Strong* strategy. The Maranguka Community Hub attempts to meet this responsibility through various in-community activities, such as report cards, daily check-ins, public events, as well as ongoing working groups in community-identified priority areas: Early Childhood and Parenting, 8-18 Year Old’s, and the Role of Men.

### (4) AUTHORISATION

Authorisation exists at various levels, from the deepest community level all the way to the highest levels of government. Generally, participants in the CSLE require informal authorisation from either one of these two levels in order to participate in the CSLG and collaborate around achieving the aspirations of the *Safe Smart Strong* strategy. As representatives of the Traditional Custodians of Culture and Country around Bourke, the Bourke Tribal Council hold the pre-eminent position within the authorising environment. The Maranguka Community Hub for example works on behalf of the Bourke Tribal Council, an ongoing authorisation process earned through respect and deliberation. Department of Regional NSW Secretary Gary Barnes stresses the importance of the Tribal Council having authorised Maranguka “to act as the interface with the not-for-profits, all levels of government and the philanthropists at the same time,” noting the difference from other instances “where groups self-appoint themselves to be the voice of the community.”

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## Factors for Success (continued)

### (4) AUTHORISATION (CONTINUED)

Similarly, intermediate organisations such as Just Reinvest NSW and funders like Dusseldorp Forum cannot effectively act or represent community interests in various forums outside of the CSLE without a degree of authorisation, which requires ongoing renewal. As a funder, Dusseldorp Forum is committed to long-term partnerships with the communities they work with, and specifically partner with place-based, community-led initiatives. Sarah Hopkins noted that for Just Reinvest NSW, “we don’t take a step without having community alongside us.” She observed that in the beginning, people at various levels of government would get frustrated with Just Reinvest NSW when they wouldn’t agree to a process proposed by government or would suggest that an idea would need to be taken back to the community for discussion. “It’s a reset for everyone when you start working in that way – and then, slowly, they start getting it.”

Finally, public sector employees typically require authorisation from senior political and bureaucratic figures in order to act. This can be difficult when collaborative activities, such as the cross-sector leadership group, run counter cultural to some of the more traditional ways that government entities have worked. Former Bourke Local Area Commander Greg Moore observed problems when

police and other public sector employees were primarily focussed on “key performance indicators, or whatever the performance measures are, or the agency’s priorities or objectives. It’s no one’s fault and it’s not personalities. It’s the nature of bureaucracies.” According to Moore, “having community members at the table inherently counters this.”

The participation and authorisation of Gary Barnes at a bureaucratic level and Brad Hazzard at a political level as “Executive Sponsors” of the CSLE is also regarded as playing an important authorising role for public sector members of the CSLE.

Beyond the direct authorisation for government employees to participate in the work of the CSLE and get behind the community’s *Safe Smart Strong* strategy, CSLE members are able to elevate issues to Hazzard and Barnes when they encounter barriers in other parts of the bureaucracy or government. As Ashley Albury noted, “if we were having dramas we could get on the phone and go – *Gary, can you talk to Secretary X? Because they’re not playing ball.*” Sarah Hopkins noted the amount of work it took to build the relationship with Minister Hazzard, particularly when he was changing portfolios, “to get across how important it was to have someone at that senior level championing the community and backing it in, regardless of their portfolio responsibilities.”



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Bourke Elder June Smith with Police Superintendent Greg Moore.



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# Looking to the Future



*It's about how we maintain and protect and increase that momentum and that enthusiasm and that appetite. So, I think, at every corner, we should have something that will continue motivating not just the government but all our partners, because I think this is a journey that I would like to think that everyone's on.*

**Alistair Ferguson** – Executive Director, Maranguka Community Hub

**Members of the Maranguka CSLE are conscious that implementation of the community's *Safe Smart Strong* strategy is a long-term project.**

Thanks to the commitment and goodwill of those involved to date, the relationship between the Bourke Tribal Council and the NSW Government is stronger in 2021 when the CSLG first met in 2015, and even stronger since the formation of the CSLE in 2016. These relationships have allowed CSLE members to be open about the challenges ahead, complemented by an optimism and commitment to address these challenges together.

One of the key challenges for the future, common to any collaborative or relationship-based endeavour, is changes in personnel. The Maranguka CSLG has already had to work through changes within NSW Police and Regional NSW. Consideration will need to be given to the transition of other key figures, including from the Maranguka Community Hub, Dusseldorp Forum and Just Reinvest NSW. Having observed the changes to date within the Maranguka CSLG, Gary Barnes observed that “the important thing about the approach that is happening in Bourke from my perspective is that it's tolerated changes because of the strength of the networks and the language, as they go about doing business.” This includes “agreed positions about what's important within the community to be focused on, that allows for new people to come in and out of the community without having to toss everything up in the air and start all over again.”

Another challenge for the future resides in operationalising collaboration agreements and principles. As one contributor put it: “getting beyond the goodwill.” The hard and crucial work of building the relationships required to

create formal documents such as collaboration agreements needs to extend into putting plans and agreements into action. Getting the *Safe Smart Strong* strategy goals into service provider contracts has been an ongoing request from the Bourke Tribal Council and Maranguka from the very beginning. The acknowledgement of the accountability of government to the Bourke community, formalising of the *Maranguka Principles* and creation of the related subgroup within the CSLE are all positive steps towards making progress in this area. Along with government leadership in terms of service and investment mapping, the conditions and relationships are established for success.

Members of the CSLE are also conscious of the need to engage new partners inside and outside of government to get behind the community's *Safe Smart Strong* strategy. To date, much of the success of the Maranguka CSLG relates to the willing involvement of public sector representatives from NSW Police, Regional NSW and Youth Justice. Contributors noted positive signs more recently, with representatives from the Departments of Health and Education beginning to engage more actively, both areas regarded as important for addressing the drivers of incarceration.

When it comes to the Commonwealth Government participation and aligning to the community-led agenda:

*I think it's fair to say that providing the Commonwealth with a framework to give their investment that's led by the community and supported by this broader interface (the CSLE) has been a useful mechanism for meaning that we don't trip over each other and sort of diminish or water down the effort that we might do.*

**Gary Barnes** – Secretary, Department of Regional NSW

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## Looking to the Future (continued)

One of the key long-term indicators that the Bourke Tribal Council, Maranguka and the CSLE are achieving their goals is systems change. This will involve more than just policy change or new funded programs. Making the *Safe Smart Strong* strategy work requires governments sharing power and working differently. Already on its journey, the Maranguka CSLG has met systemic barriers due to the unfamiliarity that many governments and non-government organisations have with a community-led way of working.

Making these more collaborative, community-led and relational ways of working mandatory rather than discretionary is one potential avenue for systems change, as is changing accountability structures so that relevant funded services are working towards and delivering on the outcomes set by community, rather than their funders.

Finally, a core long-term challenge for the CSLE is supporting the Bourke Tribal Council and Maranguka to achieve self-sufficiency. A 2018 KPMG Impact Assessment of Maranguka provided a starting point towards quantifying the economic impact of Maranguka on the NSW economy. The report suggested that over a one-year period community-led initiatives in relation to family strength, youth development and adult empowerment had a broad economic impact on the justice system and the region “five times greater than the operational costs.” of \$0.6 million. This suggests that along with building community strength, the Bourke Tribal Council’s leadership is having a positive impact on the NSW economy. Future discussions for the CSLE in this area will likely relate to: how government investment can better align to the *Safe Smart Strong* strategy; discussions about what philanthropists are currently funding and when that might transition to government; and, how the economic savings generated through community activity can be returned to the community and reinvested into further community-led solutions.



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Young people attending the Bourke PCYC (Police and Community Youth Club).

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# Conclusion

**The primary purpose of this publication is to support the ongoing work of the Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Group and Executive.**

As an important point of connection between the Bourke Tribal Council and the NSW Government, these groupings of community, government and non-government organisations will be crucial to the success of the community's aspirations as laid out in the *Growing Our Kids Up Safe Smart and Strong* strategy. By detailing how the CSLG and CSLE have evolved over time, the factors involved in the successes achieved to date, and the challenges waiting in the future, this document has the potential to become a landmark document for current and future supporters of the Bourke Tribal Council's agenda for change.

This document may also assist the various members of the Maranguka CSLG and CSLE in communicating to other parts of government, non-government organisations, and the service sector what the role of these groups are and how they might differ from previous structures people have been part of. This is potentially important for engaging new partners to support the work of the Bourke Tribal Council, as well as for those looking to support other Indigenous communities pursuing self-determination in a similar fashion.

Overall, the case study of the Maranguka Cross Sector Leadership Group offers insights into how governments and service providers can align policy and resources towards a community-led agenda, in a way that respects and shares power with local leadership. In Bourke, the community's development of the *Growing Our Kids Up Safe Smart and Strong* strategy has been an essential focal point for this relationship.

The clear articulation of whole of life aspirations for children and young people helps to connect, orientate and centre the activities of CSLG participants. In contexts where such a strategy did not exist, government and non-government partners may be able to support its development and local leadership capability through frameworks such as collective impact or justice reinvestment.

The Maranguka CSLE experience suggests that when it comes to governments working with communities: successful collaborations move at the speed of trust, they cannot and should not be rushed; accountability involves the mechanisms for building and maintaining relationships as much as it does measuring service inputs, outputs and outcomes; and authorisation similarly flows in two directions – a community level which endorses people and organisations to act on their behalf, and a government level with senior political and bureaucratic figures providing permission for public sector employees to explore working in different ways. Core to all of these is clearly the respect that must be afforded to local community leadership, in whatever form it takes.

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## Process

This document was prepared by **Mark Riboldi**, Collaborative Research & Policy Manager from the Sydney Policy Lab at the University of Sydney, supported by funding from Dusseldorp Forum and the Paul Ramsay Foundation. Mark is additionally a volunteer Executive Committee member of Just Reinvest NSW. Research assistance was provided by **Lara Smal**. High level advice and guidance were provided by Sydney Policy Lab Director Professor **Marc Stears**. Contributors were interviewed by Mark Riboldi either individually or in small groups between May and July 2021. The analysis and format of the case study was completed with the support of a Steering Group convened by the Sydney Policy Lab and Dusseldorp Forum.

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## Photo credits

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## Disclaimer

Unless directly attributed, the content of this document do not represent the views of individual participants, the organisations they work for, or the University of Sydney. This document has been created in the spirit of supporting current and future members of the Maranguka CSLG in their work in implementing the Bourke Tribal Council’s *Growing Our Kids Up Safe Smart Strong* strategy, both on the ground in Bourke and through necessary changes at a systems level.

## Enquiries

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