



Aboriginal Safety Promotion Strategy



Cover illustration – Danny Eastwood

A detail of the design titled *A Community – Togetherness and Health* which is the artists interpretation of government and community working together to improve Aboriginal Health.

The story is as follows:

- The hands depict Aboriginal people reaching out for health services.
- The larger and smaller figures in top centre depict government and Aboriginal community organisations working together.
- The goanna, stethoscope and medicines in the centre illustrate the old and new ways of health and healing.
- The dark and light figures which form a circle, and joining hands at the bottom, depicts all communities coming together in partnership.

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Goals

- To significantly reduce the burden of accidental and intentional injury among Aboriginal people.
- To focus agencies and organisations from all sectors on the role they can play in promoting Aboriginal safety and preventing Aboriginal injury.



Background

Injury has been identified as a priority area for the National Public Health Partnership. Aboriginal representatives developed a national statement on Aboriginal Injury and Safety Promotion in 2000 at the National Injury Prevention Conference in Canberra. This document called for the development of a systematic approach to safety and injury prevention for Aboriginal people based on public health principles. The Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing is developing this approach but each state will need to develop complementary activities and policies.

The Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) has agreed in principle to the development of a NSW strategy for injury prevention in Aboriginal communities. The development of a NSW strategy is linked to and will support the injury prevention strategies 4.6 and 4.7 outlined in Key Priority 4 of the NSW Aboriginal Health Strategic Plan 5. The strategy is also being developed in line with the proposal to build a national plan for injury prevention in Aboriginal communities. This process is about to commence under the directorship of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group of the National Public Health Partnership. Additionally, the revised draft edition of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy 6 lends strong support for injury through the key principles of health promotion, working together, and prevention strategies for improving Aboriginal health.

The Aboriginal Health Promotion Advisory Committee of the AH&MRC agreed to become the advisory committee for the development of the strategy. In addition, a panel of key Aboriginal community health workers agreed to provide an advice service to the process.

NSW has an opportunity to lead the way in developing and implementing best practice in Aboriginal Safety Promotion and Injury Prevention. Over the past three years NSW Health has conducted projects on injury surveillance and injury prevention and a pool of informed and committed people has been created. This group, drawn from across the state, have been involved in developing this strategy.

Key facts that underlie the decision to develop this strategy:

- Aboriginal injury rates in NSW (deaths, hospitalisation and emergency treatment) are at least three times and possibly six times those of non-Aboriginal people.^{1,2}
- Violence and self-harm associated with social and cultural disruption are widespread among Aboriginal people
- Mainstream organisations often leave the provision of services to Aboriginal people to Aboriginal service providers instead of recognising Aboriginal services as supplementary and complementary, aimed at increasing capacity and options for services to disadvantaged groups.
- Mainstream injury prevention and safety promotion strategies do not necessarily deal with, or have clear relevance to, the priority issues for Aboriginal people.
- Aboriginal communities and leaders are themselves increasingly concerned at the effects on health, social and societal wellbeing.



1 Illawarra Health Service Shoalhaven Aboriginal Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project phase 1 report. Nowra. 2001.

2 Mid North Coast Area Health Service Mid North Coast Aboriginal Injury Surveillance Project report: pride respect and responsibility. Port Macquarie. June 2001.

Scope

The strategy covers all aspects of safety promotion. It seeks to reduce harm, to increase the sense of well being and to provide opportunities for Aboriginal people to be proud of their achievements and to take greater control of initiatives aimed at enhancing community safety.

It deals with:

- accidental injury
- intentional self harm
- violence
- the need for safe environments
- the need to feel safe.



Principles

Underlying the strategy are two basic principles:

1. The right to be safe
2. The responsibility to promote and maintain the safety of others.

Within these there are six operational principles that underpin all actions under the strategy. These have been identified in consultation with a wide range of Aboriginal people. They form the rationale for the major elements of the strategy.

Build respect and responsibility

The work done under this strategy must seek to enhance the self-respect of Aboriginal people. This will be achieved by promoting leadership and control by Aboriginal people while focusing on the responsibility of the whole community and its agencies to be partners in increasing community safety. It must aim to produce success in changing environments, in producing shared responsibility for problems and shared celebration of successful programs and projects.

Informed setting of priorities

Priorities must be set on the basis of sound information and systematic analysis. Information about injury and safety needs to be gathered, interpreted and applied to setting local, regional and state priorities for action.

Priorities will be set strategically to deal with issues that will build strength and commitment to safety promotion and contribute to the overall wellbeing of Aboriginal people. They will consider:

- frequency of occurrence
- severity of impact (to individuals and to the community)
- availability of opportunities and mechanisms to promote safety
- contribution to the well-being of the community.

Many settings, many different opportunities

Aboriginal culture is diverse. Aboriginal people live in a wide range of settings and experience a rich range of lifestyles. The work under this strategy will recognise this variation as strength and seek to respond to the needs of local groups of Aboriginal people. It will seek to reflect, learn from and value this diversity.

Accredited program

Those who work in response to this strategy will receive formal recognition of their skills and knowledge. The strategy will include a formal education program for workers appropriately accredited at TAFE and University level. The units provided will be constructed to allow cross accreditation with a range of tertiary level courses. They will form part of more broadly focussed degree and certificate curricula. Informal learning and experience will also be available.

Link with other health and health related strategies

Injury and safety issues are tightly linked to general wellbeing, both as a cause and an effect. The NSW Aboriginal Health Partnership and its regional counterparts provide the fundamental linkage structures for health strategies. The following strategies have been identified as having close links to work under this strategy:

- NSW Aboriginal Health Policy 'Ensuring Progress'
- NSW Aboriginal Health Partnership Agreement
- NSW Aboriginal Health Strategic Plan
- Strategic Directions for Health
- NSW Aboriginal Mental Health Policy
- NSW Aboriginal Family Health Strategy
- Moving Forward in Men's Health
- NSW Governments' Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal People Implementation of Government Response to Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
- NSW Aboriginal Employment Strategy
- NSW Health Promotion Program Directions Paper
- NSW Aboriginal Health Information Guidelines
- NSW Aboriginal Men's Health Implementation Plan.

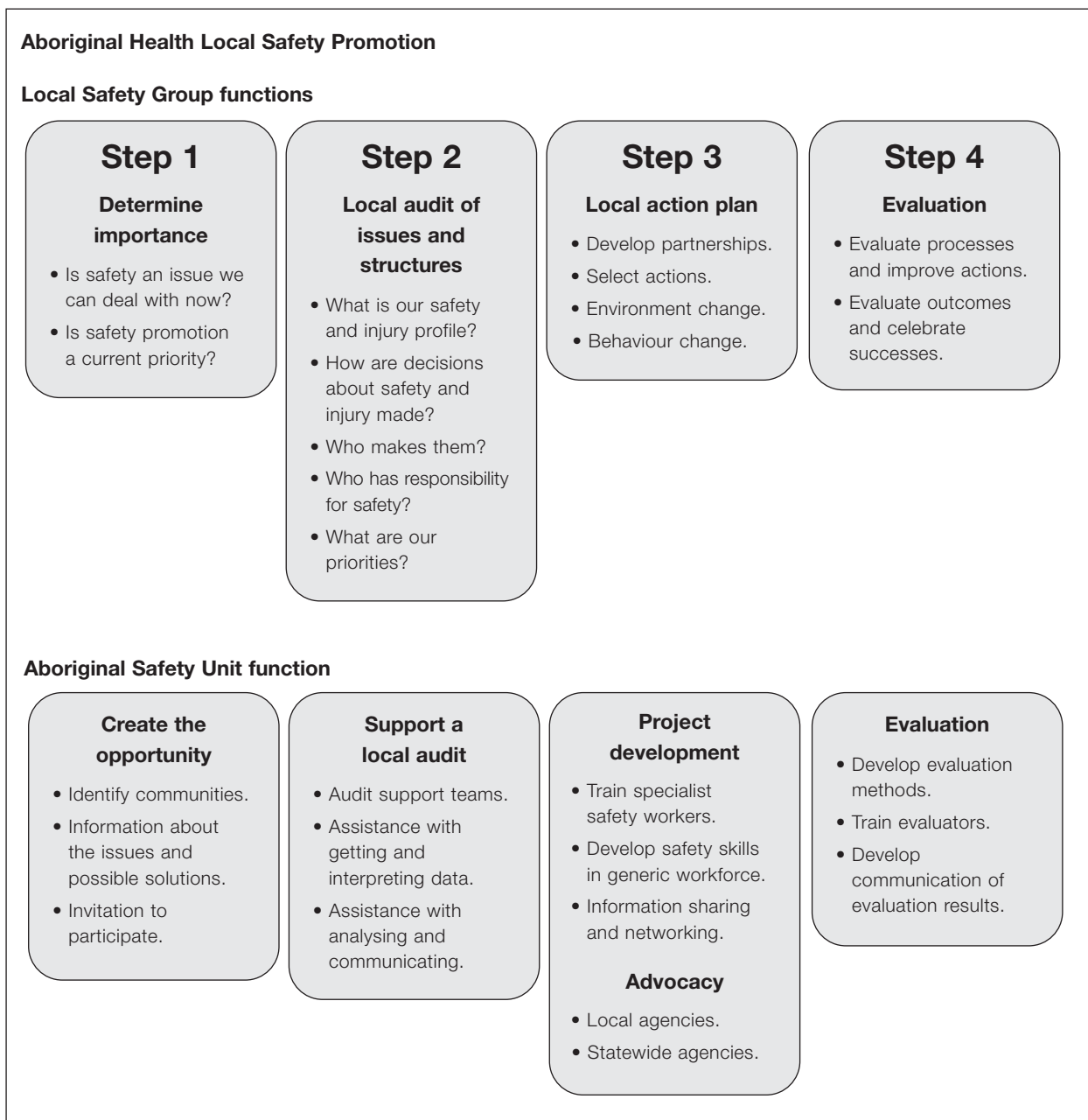
Transfer knowledge and build capacity

Interactive participatory learning will form a major building block of safety promotion. It is important to improve the knowledge and self-esteem of all participants. Communication of information will actively utilise traditional Aboriginal forms of learning and communication through conversation and art.



Part 1 outlines the major actions of the Aboriginal Safety Unit to promote the development of local safety initiatives in the context of the Aboriginal partnership structure.

Map of the local safety promotion strategy showing the roles of local communities and the Aboriginal Safety Unit



Strategic direction: health partnerships to build local safety promotion

Provide an opportunity to participate

Information about the nature of injury and safety issues is not systematically available to decision-makers. In this climate the view of the problem is fragmented and it is difficult to identify effective change strategies.

Clear information will be provided to all Aboriginal decision-makers about patterns of injury and safety concerns among Aboriginal people. They will be provided with an opportunity to respond to this information and to seek support for undertaking a detailed assessment of local issues.

Example

Stage 1 of the Aboriginal Injury Prevention and Surveillance Project gave the Aboriginal community in the Shoalhaven a clear picture of how many risks interact to cause people to be hurt. A project officer was employed as part of the Health Partnership to conduct and report on the study with the Shoalhaven Hospital and the Aboriginal Community.

The second stage of the project was to employ two project officers to implement the findings of the report. The community started with small projects aimed at reducing the likelihood of sporting injury, improving safety in the home and housing for health projects.

The report also acknowledged that family violence, social and emotional wellbeing and drug and alcohol issues – all interact to create unsafe community environments. This provided the basis on which to plan collaboration and cooperation between services for the safety of the whole community.

The project has enhanced the capacity of the Aboriginal community to control its own service delivery and enabled community members to take ownership of the safety of their own environment.

Local profile

Where local Aboriginal decision makers view injury and safety issues as a current priority, a local profile of issues, needs and opportunities to make a difference will be undertaken in partnership with local leaders.

The profile will:

- use existing data sources to identify patterns of issues
- obtain qualitative information about safety and injury concerns – both in relation to occurrence and response
- identify the agencies responsible for risk management in the areas
- identify opportunities for improving safety.

Example

The Mid North Coast Injury Surveillance Project found that poor environmental management, inadequate access to services and facilities, and a clear lack of societal opportunity in relation to employment and social activity were the main underlying factors to injury.

The study was able to identify commonalities in the type, activity and place in which the majority of injuries occurred. Injuries sustained around the home or within the community setting while undertaking or enjoying leisure activities and informal sporting activities was clearly evident. The study also found an overwhelming correlation between alcohol and interpersonal violence, falls, lacerations and transport related trauma.

Local action

Local partnerships will be developed to initiate or strengthen safety promotion strategies. Using the information from the profile local communities will be supported to:

- choose priorities for action
- identify safety promotion and injury prevention strategies
- create the imperative for action among agencies with a responsibility for safety issues
- facilitate monitoring, documentation, reflection and analysis of experience.

Resources and people including an Aboriginal Safety Unit will support each local initiative.

Local program support

The skills and resources to support the work under this strategy need to be strengthened. Local programs will be supported by a team of trained workers who will assist in the provision of expertise and training in:

- community group formation
- risk analysis
- safety promotion and injury prevention initiative evaluation
- negotiation with organisations and agencies
- strategy development
- strategy implementation
- monitoring, documentation analysis and evaluation.

Shoalhaven

An overall management committee works to build partnerships that influence the activities of both the project workers and all the agencies and services working towards a healthy and safer community.

The Committee is investigating the possibility of becoming a World Health Organisation designated Aboriginal safe community.

Mid North Coast

A project management committee was formed and membership was drawn from agencies in the area responsible for injury risk management. They included a broad range of government, non-government and Aboriginal community controlled organisations.

The Mid North Coast Project recommends the employment of Aboriginal safety assessment officers across the area. These positions to be Aboriginal identified and recruited from the local communities. The communities will be encouraged to identify opportunities for improving safety through these officers.

Example

In order to develop strategies to assist Aboriginal communities in the reduction and prevention of injury it is essential to have the support of the Aboriginal communities identified to enable a thorough analysis of the current levels of risk and processes to ensure its rectification.

It is therefore imperative to recognise that no matter how many times injury prevention is identified in strategies, it is the Aboriginal communities that will have ultimate control over the success, scope and future of any such initiative. It is essential that Aboriginal communities, their members and key agencies are involved equally throughout the entire process to develop and maintain injury prevention partnerships.

The Mid North Coast negotiation process was conducted at times, venues and locations deemed appropriate to the needs of the communities involved. Focus groups at venues selected according to accessibility and comfort of participants; semi-structured interviews with members of local Aboriginal community networks; event narrative interviews with Aboriginal people who had recently sustained injuries; were all methods used in this process.

Negotiations were assisted by the Mid North Coast Aboriginal Health Partnership and the Mid North Coast Aboriginal Injury Working Party. The working party had formal mechanisms for reporting to key committees across the area. Membership of this group included a wide range of organisations and Aboriginal community representatives.

Education and training

There is a shortage of trained safety promotion practitioners. Very few tertiary courses provide in-depth study in this field. Generic safety promotion and injury prevention training is supported as an adjunct to other courses that are available in areas such as public and environmental health and epidemiology, health promotion, ergonomics and occupational safety.

Two education and training areas have been identified:

1. Aboriginal injury prevention and safety promotion practitioners

Aboriginal workers from a range of disciplines will be trained in all aspects of safety promotion and injury prevention. This will include:

- risk identification
- problem analysis including use of injury data
- assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of possible safety promotion and injury prevention initiatives
- communication, public relations and community liaison
- advocacy and agency liaison
- community development and decision making
- program evaluation.

Opportunities for formal studies will be negotiated with relevant educational units. Studies in these areas should form units that will complement a range of existing courses in a number of fields and will be developed and accredited as elective units or stream options within these courses. Units should be accredited at tertiary certificate, diploma and degree level and be fully recognised as contributing to vocational qualifications. Opportunities for linking these study areas with job training programs will be actively pursued.

2. Non-Aboriginal agency and staff orientation

There is a need to improve the contribution of non-Aboriginal people to Aboriginal safety promotion. Barriers exist that lower the effective use of services. One of these is a lack of confidence in non-Aboriginal people when dealing with Aboriginal people. This disrupts service levels and reduces the availability of generic services to Aboriginal people.

The work done under the strategy will focus on effective partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. There will also be an orientation process including workshops and mentor schemes that bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people together with the aim of breaking down the misunderstandings and barriers that currently exist. These courses will be implemented in areas where Aboriginal decision-makers have identified safety promotion as a priority.

Information sharing

Active communication and visiting between communities involved in safety promotion will be supported. It is important that each project should learn from others and that this learning should occur in ways that maximises transfer of useful information. Communication strategies will build on local culture and learning methods endorsed by local communities. The Aboriginal Safety Unit will support this process by:

- actively engaging existing aboriginal networks
- actively promoting networking between interested groups
- linking to safety promotion and injury prevention expertise nationally and internationally
- maintaining a web site
- conducting interactive meetings to share progress and solve problems
- developing skills in recording events and experiences in artistic, video, photographic, electronic and written form.

Research and evaluation

There is a need to build up the evidence base in the field of Aboriginal safety promotion.

The Aboriginal Safety Unit will work with health and other sector data analysts to improve the accessibility and accuracy of data related to the safety and injury of Aboriginals.

Evaluation of project progress should be practical and simple, meeting the need for accountability and improved implementation. It should provide feedback to each local project.

In addition there is a need for evaluation research to be implemented in a strategic fashion to measure the population effectiveness of individual strategies and overall strategy. This will be achieved through partnership with universities and links to the training courses detailed above.

Evaluation will therefore include:

- formative evaluation driven by local people
- outcome evaluations of local projects
- research and evaluation activities in partnership with universities to build evidence of effectiveness and efficiency of interventions and counter-measures.

Resources to be used for evaluation will be provided in line with the level of evaluation required. They will support:

- quantitative and qualitative research and evaluation
- the development and evaluation of communication strategies
- improvement in the quality, relevance and availability of health and other sector data sets.

Summary of strategies and outcomes

	Strategy	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress indicator
Provide an opportunity to participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inform Area Health Services and Aboriginal community controlled health organisations of the nature of injuries and safety issues among Aboriginal people and the potential for reducing the burden on Aboriginal people. ● Invite local communities and areas to be involved in the generation of a local injury profile. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Informed decision on injury as a priority. ● Recruitment of communities to undertake local profiling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aboriginal Safety Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aboriginal Safety Unit formed and operational.
Local profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assist communities to create a local injury and safety profile by accessing data held by the NSW Department of Health and other agencies and supplementing it with locally derived qualitative information. ● Develop local multi-sectoral Injury/safety interest groups in participating localities. ● Provide resources and skilled support for local injury profile development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Informed commitment to safety as a priority in the context of local needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aboriginal Safety Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local profiles developed.
Local action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Choose priorities for action. ● Identify safety promotion and injury prevention strategies. ● Create the imperative for action among agencies with a responsibility for safety issues. ● Facilitate monitoring, documentation, reflection and analysis of experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase the pool of skilled injury prevention workers accessible to Aboriginal people. ● Local management and ownership of injury prevention. ● High quality risk assessment and prevention plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local safety groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local groups formed and functioning. ● Funding allocation to support local groups for three years.

	Strategy	Outcome	Responsibility	Progress indicator
Local program support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate local safety promotion groups to set priorities. Provide access to skilled injury prevention workers across Australia and internationally to identify appropriate counter measures and change strategies. Provide resources to assist with the implementation of high priority injury prevention and safety strategies. Provide advocacy support for local groups in approaching and negotiating action among local agencies. Facilitate documentation and reflection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a core structure for injury prevention strategies. Effective selection of counter measures. Implementation of highly effective injury prevention strategies. Wide commitment by local agencies for injury prevention management and safety promotion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal Safety Unit Injury Prevention Policy Branch Aboriginal Health Branch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priorities identified and intervention strategies documented. Active linkage with injury prevention leaders. Implementation of selected injury prevention and safety promotion programs. Successful negotiations with local agencies and organisations. Public documentation of successful practice.
Education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal injury prevention and safety promotion practitioners. Non-Aboriginal agency and staff orientation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a pool of highly skilled Aboriginal safety workers. Effective partnerships in safety promotion between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal Safety Unit Tertiary education institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active training of Aboriginal people in safety promotion. Increased harmony and active partnerships aimed at promoting safety.
Information sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active communication and visiting between communities involved in safety promotion. Developing skills in recording events and experiences in artistic, video, photographic, electronic and written form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective transfer of skills, knowledge and programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal Safety Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widespread knowledge of effective projects and increased commitment to safety promotion.
Research and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formative evaluation driven by local people. Outcome evaluations of local projects. Research and evaluation activities in partnership with universities to build evidence of effectiveness and efficiency of interventions and counter measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved quality and accessibility of safety data. Improved evidence base for planning interventions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local safety projects Aboriginal Safety Unit Injury Prevention Policy Branch Tertiary education institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved evidence base for Aboriginal safety promotion.



Part 2 identifies the importance that the health sector places on partnerships between sectors and organisations at a state level to create an environment that provides a strong foundation and supportive climate for locally based initiatives. It indicates the commitment by the NSW Department of Health to be actively involved in a whole-of-government approach.

Strategic direction: promote a statewide Aboriginal safety promotion structure

NSW Health will encourage and support the development of a statewide management group to work on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of safety promotion within individual agencies and across sector boundaries. This is likely to be achieved as part of a whole-of-government process through partnership agreements at individual agency and multi-sectoral level.

The health sector's role is to drive this process but will also be an active stakeholder. The strategy documented here outlines the health sector's commitment to a whole of government process. It spells out the health sector's acknowledgment of the role of other sectors and organisations and its commitment to partnerships at state and local level.

State government organisations

The health sector will support partnership agreements with agencies that have major responsibility for the environments in which Aboriginal people live.

These include:

- Aboriginal Housing Authority
- Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council
- Attorney General
- Department of Housing
- Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- Department of Aged and Disability Services
- Department of Community Services
- Department of Corrections
- Department of Education and Training
- Department of Local Government
- Department of Sport and Recreation
- Department of Education
- State Emergency Services
- Environment Protection Authority
- Juvenile Justice
- NSW Bush Fire Brigade
- NSW Fire Brigade
- NSW Police
- Premier's Department
- Roads and Traffic Authority
- Workcover Authority.

The partnerships should lead to agreements about the provision of safe environments and quality services to Aboriginal people by mainstream agencies and the role of supplementary programs for Aboriginal people that offset disadvantage or meet particular needs.

Local government organisations

Local government is an important player in the development of the built and recreational environment. The health sector supports partnerships with the Local Government Association and Department of Local Government and regional local government coordination bodies to develop:

- standards of customer response to Aboriginal people and communities
- agreements on the roles and responsibilities of local government and lands councils for safety promotion and risk management
- standards for consultation with respect to changes in safety or risk engendered by new developments or changes in local government services.

Other agencies and organisations

A wide range of organisations contribute to the level of risk and the effectiveness of safety promotion and injury prevention in the community. The health sector supports partnerships among key statewide organisations and businesses to improve safety promotion and risk management strategies across NSW. These will include among many others:

- Aboriginal controlled community health organisations
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
- Aboriginal lands councils
- energy distribution agencies
- hotel and liquor trades associations
- Koori press
- non-government health and welfare and employment organisations
- organisations providing correctional services
- private rental housing providers associations
- Registered Clubs Association of NSW (Clubs NSW)
- sporting clubs and associations
- telecommunication providers
- unions.



