



NSW Youth Parliament

Cultural Representation and Empowerment Scheme Youth Act 2025

Bill Proposed By: Aboriginal Affairs Committee

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I certify that this public Bill, which originated in the Youth Legislative Assembly, has finally passed the Youth Legislative Assembly of New South Wales.

Hamani Tanginoa, Youth Parliament Coordinator



NSW Youth Parliament

Cultural Representation and Empowerment Scheme Youth Act 2025

Act no. 3, 2025

A Bill for

An Act to establish the Cultural Representation and Empowerment Scheme to uplift and support First Nations Young Peoples through improved access and outcomes in health, government, justice, economic advancement and environmental action, and other purposes.

I have examined this bill and find it to correspond in all respects with the bill as finally passed by the Youth Legislative Assembly.

Lian Sequeira, Youth Governor of the NSW Youth Parliament

Explanatory Note

Summary

The object of this Bill is to improve the wellbeing, empowerment and representation of First Nations Youth across areas of social, economic, environmental and civic life.

This Bill comes at a time where response to ongoing challenges faced by First Nations communities is more than necessary. This includes limited access to culturally appropriate healthcare, underrepresentation in government and leadership roles, and barriers to economic prosperity. Additionally, the disengagement of First Nations youth from environmental decision-making and systemic issues in the justice system have contributed to their over-representation in youth justice systems. Through reforms in health, economic development, justice, advocacy, and environmental governance, this Bill seeks to strengthen the systems that support First Nations youth and promote long-term empowerment, representation and self-determination.

Overall, this Bill is necessary to drive lasting improvements in these areas and to ensure overall empowerment and representation of First Nations Youth.

Overview of provisions

Part 1 sets out the short title, commencement, objects and definitions of the Act.

Part 2 sets out to reduce the overrepresentation of First Nations youth in the justice system through a range of culturally appropriate and community-led initiatives. This includes mandatory cultural competency training for justice personnel, the establishment of a dedicated legal advocacy service, appointment of community justice advisors, and the expansion of Circle Sentencing and the Youth Koori Court.

Part 3 establishes new funding streams and expands existing programs to strengthen advocacy for First Nations youth, particularly in rural and regional areas. Aiming to empower youth through targeted support and enhanced service delivery within local communities.

Part 4 promotes economic empowerment of First Nations youth through the creation of business and skills development pathways. This includes initiatives such as an alternative to Year 12, startup grants, vocational training expansion, enterprise hubs, digital infrastructure improvements, and cultural connection competitions in arts and sports; all of which foster identity and entrepreneurial potential.

Part 5 sets out to enhance support for Indigenous community sport through sustainable funding, leadership pathways, infrastructure, and cultural safety training. It seeks to strengthen Aboriginal-led healthcare services and improve access and cultural responsiveness of rural healthcare programs and infrastructure.

Part 6 sets out to establish a Youth-Led Land Advisory Council to increase First Nations participation in environmental decision-making. It proposes legislative reforms to strengthen the operation of the Native Title Act and expand the use of cultural burning practices in rural and regional areas, supporting self-determination and sustainable land management.

Rationale

Introduction

As the Aboriginal Affairs Committee, we've identified a key issue impacting First Nations Young Peoples across NSW: the lack of cultural representation and empowerment. This affects their social, emotional, and community wellbeing. We've broken this issue down into four pillars: Economic Advancement, Environment, Health and Sport, and Government and Justice; each reflecting barriers that limit opportunities for Indigenous youth. Our bill proposes targeted, culturally informed solutions to address these barriers and empower the next generation of First Nations leaders.

Economic Prosperity:

The economic pathways to prosperity and business ownership for First Nations Young Peoples remain constrained by intergenerational disadvantage, fueling systemic barriers within the Western education system, restricting access to vocational education and entrepreneurial skill development. Whilst the 2024 Closing the Gap Report indicates gaps between First Nations and Non-First Nations Students' attainment of Year 12 or equivalent in New South Wales is decreasing, from 24.1% to 21.2%, barriers persist. Despite this, statistics indicating 62% of First Nations Young Peoples aged 15 – 25 are employed or in education or training (Australian Government, 2024). These statistics signify that NSW are on track to hit CTG targets but allows for more opportunity for First Nations Young Peoples to achieve economic prosperity through alternative education pathways.

Building on First Nations engagement with skills and employment, the Government faces a critical opportunity to channel this momentum into business ownership, thereby reducing economic inequalities through the business sector. NSW is well positioned to equip First Nations Young Peoples with the skills to achieve economic self-determination through enterprise, as part of the \$5.6 million toward helping develop NSW First Nations businesses and organisations. In doing so, it is crucial the government recognise the necessity for culturally informed, targeted, and delivered support toward these communities to ensure culture remains at the heart of economic empowerment whilst reshaping Westernised systems of knowledge transfer to best support vulnerable First Nations communities. Furthermore, economic inaccessibility has become an increasingly pervasive issue for Indigenous communities in remote NSW, as they face challenges that weaken their local micro-economies, and threaten cultural heritage. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021-22), over 32,000 people live in remote NSW, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples making up 16.5% of remote and 31.4% of very remote populations respectively, compared to a national average of 3.4%. This isolation has limited access to education and wellbeing support, which in turn reduces economic participation. As a result, only 20% of Indigenous-owned businesses in remote Australia achieve sustainable revenue, trapping communities in cycles of economic hardship.

To break this cycle, we draw on global precedents, such as microfinance initiatives, wherein small loans and financial services are provided to individuals or small businesses. Historically, these initiatives have increased small business loan access by 30% and local employment by 15% (World Bank, 2019). By providing similar support, we can strengthen the entrepreneurial capacity of Indigenous businesses, allowing for economic stability. To further support these businesses, addressing the digital divide is essential. Improved

technology can enhance market outreach, allowing Indigenous enterprises to thrive. Throughout this process, solutions must remain culturally sensitive, ensuring economic growth honours and preserves Indigenous cultural heritage.

Environment:

A significant disconnect from Country for First Nations Youth builds a risk of decline in culturally informed biodiversity management and environmental wellbeing. Barriers in existing acts, including the 1997 Rural Fires Act and the 1994 NSW Native Title Act, are disincentives for culturally informed biodiversity management and build a divide between First Nations' communities and major corporations. These barriers are underpinned by systemic inequality in governance and a lack of understanding about First Nations' land management.

Culturally informed biodiversity management is effective in achieving better environmental outcomes. This can be broken down into key barriers, including cultural burning, sustainable harvesting and ecological knowledge. Cultural practices have proven to be more effective in addressing these environmental performance indicators, in northern NSW cultural burning is being used to protect the habitat of threatened native species, such as the Hastings river mouse, and eastern brittle bird. These creatures' habitats require frequent low intensity burns to maintain undergrowth density. The initiative is educating Aboriginal men through local Elders knowledge on the practice of cultural burning and is a unification between the local indigenous people, Bellingen Shire Council and NSW national parks rangers.

Systemic inequality has led to disconnect between First Nations people and their traditional lands. An Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report found that over 60% of First Nations Young Peoples live in urban areas, reducing access to traditional lands. This has correlated to just 16% of First Nations Young Peoples living on land they have traditional ties to (ABS, 2021). Signifying a barrier to cultural environmental management. Getting young people on Country would not only solve many of the environmental concerns, but it would also create positive mental health outcomes. A 2009 Australian Health Journal report found that programs getting First Nations Young Peoples' back on Country improves wellbeing, mental health, and school attendance. We also see barriers to cultural land management with the 1997 Rural Fires Act, establishing the Rural Fire Services and the rules for undertaking bush fire hazard reduction and planning, in rural areas of NSW. The Act does not mention cultural fire and doesn't empower Indigenous people in decision making or create processes for assessing and approving fires that are considered for a cultural purpose, rather than a hazard reduction.

Furthermore, issues with the 1994 Native Title Act have led to barriers in achieving environmental cultural prosperity. Despite Native Title land being recognised across 2.9 million square kilometers in Australia, the act fails to achieve desired economic outcomes for First Nations' communities. Major corporations using these lands for economic purposes lack understanding of the importance of the land, yet it is the foremost importance and significance for First Nations communities. This lack of understanding within the act has led to circumstances whereby there is a power imbalance between huge corporations and First Nations communities. Leading to paltry compensation and situations where First Nations communities have limited decision-making authority over development on their lands. A

youth driven advisory panel, advising companies on the importance of the land and fairer monetary compensation would assist in the fixing of these outcomes.

Health and Sport:

Access to appropriate healthcare for First Nations Peoples in NSW has always been an issue, but targeted health initiatives led by the community have seen improvements to First Nations Peoples' lives. Examples of this are the Kiilalaana Marta-Marri which translates to 'Growing up really big Barkindji'. This initiative was made in partnership with Maari Ma Health and the formerly called Department of Family and Community Services. This parenting guidebook helps first time First Nations Parents raising a child. This culturally sensitive, community health initiative has worked, with the average birth weight for Aboriginal newborns increasing over 10 years, but not significantly. Other community-led health organisations such as the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations look after many smaller community health organisations and make healthcare more accessible to Aboriginal people. It is proven that First Nations people are more likely to go to the doctors if they feel safe and respected. Having community-led health initiatives like 'Nguuwa - lina' (we're cooking) has been proven to make health more accessible to Aboriginal people in NSW. Location is an issue when it comes to accessibility of medical help, having limited medical centers in regional and rural communities means increased wait times and the deterioration of First Nations Peoples seeking help when they need it.

To improve health outcomes for Indigenous youth, efforts supporting Indigenous sport participation in NSW have seen notable successes. Initiatives like the NSW Aboriginal Sport Strategy (2018–2023) and Active Kids Vouchers have improved access, with over 45,000 vouchers redeemed by First Nations children by 2022. Community-led events such as the NSW Koori Knockout promote cultural pride and unity, attracting over 140 teams and 30,000 spectators. Elite athlete pathways have been effective, with Aboriginal players making up 12% of NRL athletes. Cultural recognition through Indigenous Rounds and traditional games in schools fosters inclusion, however, challenges remain. First Nations Peoples in rural NSW are 40% less likely to access organised sport due to limited facilities and geographic isolation.

Short-term, grant-based funding undermines program continuity, while 39% of First Nations athletes report experiencing racism. First Nations representation in leadership roles is also lacking, challenges stemming from deeper systemic issues. Health inequalities and lower school engagement limit participation, with historical injustices and ongoing experiences of racism discourage participation. Solutions include long-term funding for Indigenous-led sport programs, expansion of rural infrastructure, and mandatory cultural safety training. Promoting Indigenous leadership in coaching and governance, alongside integrated support services such as transport and health links can assist reducing barriers. These steps are essential for creating inclusive, sustainable sporting environments that empower Indigenous communities.

Justice:

In recent years, strategies and initiatives have been implemented to strengthen the relationship between Government and First Nations Communities. The NSW Government's OCHRE aims to improve outcomes for First Nations Peoples and Communities across NSW,

by supporting the concept of self-determination, enabling First Nations Communities to make decisions for themselves and work alongside Government agencies in their own ways. OCHRE (Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment) symbolizes the deep connection First Nations Communities have with Country and putting healing at the center of all discussions. The OCHRE Plan addresses the issue of First Nations Peoples not being involved in the decision-making at a state government level. However, representation in the Government has been quite low. Since the establishment of the NSW Parliament in 1824, we've only had 4 MPs who've identified as First Nations. (Parliament of Australia, 2021)

In Research led by the Global Institute for Women's Leadership, 84% of First Nations Young Peoples feel they don't feel represented in State Government, with 92% feel like they don't feel listened to by State Governments (The Global Institute for Women's Leadership, 2024). The Government has an opportunity to utilize the knowledge and lived experiences for First Nations Young Peoples through sponsoring leadership and civic education programs to provide scholarships specifically for First Nations Young Peoples, funding programs in regional areas to increase accessibility, and grants for in-school social justice groups.

First Nations Peoples are historically disproportionately represented in each stage of the justice system. First Nations Peoples constitute 8% of the population aged 10 – 17, but more than 50% of First Nations Young People are in youth detention. The NSW Government has committed to addressing overrepresentation and is aiming to reduce the rate by 30% (NSW BOCSAR, 2025). One of these means is through alternative justice initiatives which have promising results in addressing disparities. One of these initiatives is the Youth Koori Court (KYC), which is available to First Nations Children aged 10 – 17 who have been charged with a criminal offence. Since its conception in 2015, participants were 40% less likely to receive a prison sentence. (NSW BOCSAR, 2022) Another alternative justice initiative is Circle Sentencing, which is available to First Nations Adult offenders who have been found guilty or have pleaded guilty because of criminal proceedings in a local court. In a 2020 study, it found that participants are 9.3% less likely to receive a prison sentence, 3.9% less likely to reoffend within a 12-month period and take 55 days longer to reoffend when they do (NSW BOCSAR, 2020).

It is evident that these programs work and are achieving impressive results, unfortunately it is not widely accessible for First Nations Peoples in rural or remote areas and for those outside the age brackets. There is an opportunity to expand and adapt programs such as Youth Koori Court and Circle Sentencing, so that they are available across more regions and to a broader demographic. Currently, there are only 3 Youth Koori Courts across NSW (Parramatta, Surry Hills and Dubbo) and Circle sentencing is only available in 9 locations. Expanding the reach of the two systems would involve investing in culturally competent staff, legal advocates, and community support services, ensuring that First Nations Peoples from all backgrounds can access these more effective, community-based alternatives to traditional sentencing. Making these programs more available would be a critical step toward a more equitable justice system that focuses on healing, accountability, and long-term change.

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The Youth Legislature of New South Wales enacts—

Part 1 Preliminary

1 Name of Act

This Act is the Cultural Representation and Empowerment Scheme Youth Act 2025.

2 Commencement

The Act commences on 1 January 2028.

3 Objects

The objects of this Act are to—

- (a) promote justice and equity for First Nations Youth through culturally safe legal practices, diversion programs, and representation in the justice system; and
- (b) empower First Nations Youth through increased access to culturally relevant education, employment, entrepreneurship, and advocacy pathways; and
- (c) ensure cultural safety, community connection, and healing from intergenerational trauma by embedding cultural knowledge and protocols into systems affecting First Nations Youth; and
- (d) address systemic inequalities faced by First Nations Youth in detention, education, health, and economic participation; and
- (e) invest in rural and regional communities through tailored funding models, infrastructure development, and youth-led initiatives; and
- (f) promote the leadership and voices of First Nations Youth through advisory councils, grant programs, and co-designed initiatives; and
- (g) protect and strengthen Country, Culture and Language through environmental reforms, cultural practices, and land rights protections

4 Definitions

In this Act—

See Schedule 1.

Note— The *Interpretation Act 1987* also contains definitions and other provisions that affect the interpretation of this Bill.

Part 2 Justice

5 Mandatory Cultural Competency Training for Justice System Staff

- (1) All justice staff who work with First Nations Youth must complete annual cultural competency training.
- (2) The training must—
 - (a) be developed in partnership with First Nations Communities; and,
 - (b) focus on local Cultures, Histories and experiences of First Nations Peoples; and,
 - (c) include training on intergenerational trauma, system bias, and respectful engagement.

6 Establishment of a First Nations Youth Legal Advocacy Service

- (1) This Minister may, by declaration, establish a First Nations Youth Legal Advocacy Service to provide culturally appropriate legal assistance to First Nations Youth.
- (2) The First Nations Youth Legal Advocacy Service must—
 - (a) employ qualified First Nations legal professionals where possible; and,
 - (b) offer services during both pre-trial and remand stages; and,
 - (c) offer in both metropolitan and regional areas with high First Nations Youth detention rates.
- (3) The Service must investigate and, where possible, address the root causes of offending by First Nations Youth.
- (4) The Service must relay anonymised data trends and causes to the Indigenous Empowerment Advisory Body for the purposes of informed policy development.
- (5) The collection, storage, and sharing of data collected must comply with relevant privacy legislation and cultural data governance protocols, and, where appropriate, include the participation of First Nations Youth with lived experience in the analysis process.

7 Appointment of First Nations Community Justice Advisors

- (1) The Minister must appoint First Nations Community Justice Advisors to each Local Court that deals with youth justice matters.
- (2) Advisors are to provide guidance to judicial officers on cultural factors and systemic issues affected First Nations Youth.
- (3) Advisors must be drawn from respected community leaders and approved by a local First Nations governance body.

8 Expansion of Circle Sentencing

- (1) Circle Sentencing must expand and made available to First Nations Youth under the age of 18 that are charged with a criminal offence.
- (2) Circle Sentencing must be offered to all First Nations Youth who—
 - (a) plead guilty to their offences
 - (b) are placed on remand
- (3) Circle Sentencing for First Nations Youth must include the following officials—
 - (a) offender; and
 - (b) victim; and
 - (c) offender's lawyer; and
 - (d) magistrate; and
 - (e) program officer; and
 - (f) minimum of three (3) First Nations Elders; and
 - (g) official guardian/s

9 State-Wide Expansion of Youth Koori Court

- (1) The Youth Koori Court; as established under the Children's Court of New South Wales, shall be extended to operate state-wide.
- (2) Youth Koori Court sittings will be made available in all judicial districts in New South Wales where there is a demonstratable need-based on the First Nations Youth population, this includes—
 - (a) at least 5% of the total youth population; and
 - (b) acknowledged significant over-representation rates of First Nations Youth in the criminal justice system; and
 - (c) acknowledge significant re-offending rates of First Nations Youth in the criminal justice system
- (3) Appropriate funding and resources will be allocated to support the establishment, staffing, training, and ongoing operation of the Youth Koori Court in each district.
 - (a) A base amount will be allocated to Youth Koori Courts in metropolitan, urban and suburban areas
 - (b) 200% of the base amount will be allocated to regional locations
 - (c) 300% of the base amount will be allocated to rural and remote locations
- (4) The Court shall incorporate culturally appropriate practices and community involvement in accordance with established Youth Koori Court procedures.

(5) These practices must—

- (a) recognise the importance of cultural identity, community connection, and intergenerational trauma in the rehabilitation of First Nations Youth; and
- (b) allow for culturally tailored action and support plans to be developed in collaboration with the young person, their family, and any relevant third parties; and
- (c) ensure proceedings are conducted in a manner that is respectful, inclusive, and guided by cultural protocols; and
- (d) facilitate the involvement of Aboriginal Legal Services, health providers, and education or housing services where appropriate and necessary; and
- (e) promote accountability and connection to culture as a means of reducing recidivism and supporting long-term wellbeing; and
- (f) be tailored to the First Nations Youth individual; and
- (g) be tailored to the core values, traditions and culture of the First Nations Community

Part 3 Youth Advocacy

10 First Nations Youth Advocacy Financial Support

- (1) In-school First Nations advocacy groups will be eligible for a grant for the following purposes—
- (a) administrative costs; and/or
 - (b) fundraising; and/or
 - (c) program participation sponsorships; and/or
 - (d) cultural learning and empowerment school groups that support First Nations identity, leadership and peer advocacy; and/or
 - (e) campaigning and awareness of social issues
- (2) Group funding is not to be used for or contributed to a political party, candidate, or campaign, nor are members involve themselves in or endorse campaigns in their capacity as group members.
- (3) Use of funding by a group is to be managed by the executive of the group's respective school.
- (4) Groups should regularly seek the guidance of local Elders or community leaders to assist their advocacy activities
- (5) Grant amounts are based on location and are determined as follows—

- (a) base amount for schools in metropolitan, urban, and suburban areas
 - (b) 200% of the base amount for regional locations
 - (c) 300% for rural and remote locations
- (6) Groups in lower-income areas will be eligible for an additional 100% of the base amount.

11 Increase Funding to Rural and Regional Youth Advocacy Programs

- (1) An initial 25% increase in funding for rural and regional Youth Advocacy Programs to commence 20 January 2026
- (2) Over a period of 5 years an additional funding increase will be made of—
 - (a) 25% for regional programs
 - (b) 35% for rural programs; and
 - (c) will end on 20 January 2030
- (3) A minimum of 15% of all increased funding will be allocated to providing more scholarships to access Youth Advocacy Programs

Part 4 Economic Prosperity

Division 1 First Nations Business and Skills Pathway Initiative

12 Establishment of the First Nations Business and Skills Pathway Initiative

- (1) A dedicated initiative shall be established under the NSW Department of Education and Training titled the 'First Nations Business and Skills Pathway Initiative'
 - (a) the initiative must reserve 30% of placements for Out-of-Home Care First Nations Youth
- (2) This initiative will aim to support First Nations youth aged 12 - 17 to engage in culturally relevant employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, with a focus on—
 - (a) business development; and
 - (b) vocational training; and
 - (c) cultural knowledge preservation; and
 - (d) skills acquisition in high-demand sectors

13 Creation of an Alternative to Year 12 for First Nations Youth

- (1) A culturally responsive alternative to Year 12 completion will be created, known as the Cultural Enterprise and Skills Certificate
- (2) This certificate will—

- (a) be co-designed with First Nations Elders, educators and youth advocates, and
- (b) recognise cultural knowledge and enterprise skills as important learning outcomes, and
- (c) offer formal qualifications in areas including—
 - i. land management, and
 - ii. Indigenous art, and
 - iii. business operations, and
 - iv. cultural tourism
- (3) This initiative will prioritise support for First Nations students experiencing educational disadvantages due to systemic barriers, socioeconomic challenges, out-of-home care, or other inequities.
- (4) Completion of this certificate will be considered equivalent to Year 12 completion for entry into—
 - (a) TAFE NSW
 - (b) selected university bridging programs
 - (c) government employment schemes

14 First Nations Youth Start Up Grant Program

- (1) An annual First Nations Youth Start-Up Grant Program will be funded by the NSW Government for First Nations Youth aged between 14 - 17 that are seeking to start businesses that—
 - (a) are culturally appropriate; and
 - (b) are community serving; and
 - (c) addressing any skills shortage present in NSW; and
 - (d) promotes cultural preservation; and
 - (e) promotes intergenerational knowledge transfer
- (2) Applicants must complete a short business course offered by an approved First Nations-led training provider

15 Expansion of School-Based Vocational Programs for First Nations Youth

- (1) The NSW Government will partner with TAFE NSW and industry bodies to expand school-based apprenticeships and traineeships targeted to First Nations youth including—
 - (a) trade; and

- (b) health and aged care; and
- (c) renewable energy; and
- (d) digital and creative industries; and
- (e) social and case work; and
- (f) hospitality; and
- (g) teaching

(2) Programs shall be embedded with—

- (a) cultural learning; and
- (b) mentorship from Indigenous professionals; and
- (c) reconciliation-based curriculum elements

(3) Participation in these programs will count towards units for the HSC or the Cultural Enterprise and Skills Certificate

16 Establishment of First Nations Enterprise Hubs

(1) Hubs will be prioritised in areas with high First Nations unemployment rates or where community consultation and existing data such as census figures, local employment reports, and service access surveys indicate unmet demand.

- (a) the feasibility of delivering services in remote locations must be assessed as part of the site selection process

(2) These hubs will offer—

- (a) co-working spaces for First Nations youth; and
- (b) access to business coaching, legal and financial services; and
- (c) workshops on entrepreneurship, grant applications and digital skills

(3) These hubs will be governed by a local Indigenous advisory body to ensure alignment with community needs and aspirations

17 Monitoring and Accountability

(1) An annual report on First Nations Youth Empowerment Pathways will be recorded and tabled in NSW Parliament, detailing—

- (a) uptakes and outcomes of the First Nations Business and Skills Pathway initiative; and
- (b) yearly grant recipients; and
- (c) yearly business sustainability metrics recorded; and

- (d) completion rates of Cultural Enterprise and Skills Certificate and Vocational Education and Training participation rates; and
 - (e) employment and income data for past participants of programs
- (2) The First Nations Cultural Connection Through Sports will be run at a regional level and governed by the Cultural Representative Empowerment Council.

18 Upgrading Digital Infrastructure in Regional and Remote Areas

- (1) Payphones in regional and remote areas are required to have wi-fi enabled hubs
- (a) every regional or remote First Nations community must have a minimum of one such payphone, which will be government subsidised
- (2) All First Nations households classified as low-income and located in regional and remote areas will be eligible for full rebates for the costs of broadband contracts.
- (3) Outreach services will be provided in regional and remote areas for education and understanding of digital services

Division 2 Alternative Paths to Prosperity - First Nations Cultural Connection Competitions

19 First Nations Cultural Connection Through the Arts Competition

- (1) An annual First Nations Cultural Connection Through the Arts Competition shall be established under the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport.
- (2) The First Nations Cultural Connection Through the Arts will be run at a regional level and governed by the Cultural Representative Empowerment Council.
- (3) The Competition will be held at a regional level, these regions being the following—
- (a) Northern Region; and
 - (b) Metro North Region; and
 - (c) Metro South Region; and
 - (d) Hunter Region; and
 - (e) Western Region; and
 - (f) Southern Region
- (4) Categories will be determined at the discretion of the governing body, with emphasis placed on traditional forms of art and storytelling.
- (5) The winner and runner-up in each category will proceed to a state final held in Sydney with—
- (a) transport for competitors from regional and rural areas will be subsidised

20 First Nations Cultural Connection Through Sports Competition

- (1) An annual First Nations Cultural Connection Through Sports Competition shall be established under the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport
- (2) The First Nations Cultural Connection Through Sports will be run at a regional level and governed by the Cultural Representative Empowerment Council.
- (3) The Competition will be held at a regional level, these regions being the following—
 - (a) Northern Region; and
 - (b) Metro North Region; and
 - (c) Metro South Region; and
 - (d) Hunter Region; and
 - (e) Western Region; and
 - (f) Southern Region
- (4) Categories will be determined at the discretion of the governing body, with emphasis placed on traditional forms of sport.
- (5) The winner and runner-up in each category will proceed to a state final held in Sydney
 - (a) transport for competitors from regional and rural areas will be subsidised

Part 5 Health and Sport

Division 1 Sport

21 Sustainable Support for Indigenous Sporting Programs

- (1) The Minister must establish a long-term funding scheme for Indigenous-led sporting clubs and organisations across New South Wales
- (2) Funding must be delivered through multi-year grants, with a minimum term of three years
- (3) Eligible organisations must demonstrate community control, cultural relevance, and alignment with local needs

22 Infrastructure Development in Regional Aboriginal Communities

- (1) The Minister must prioritise investment in sports infrastructure in rural and regional Aboriginal communities
- (2) Infrastructure may include but is not limited to—
 - (a) multipurpose sporting courts and fields; and
 - (b) accessible changing and bathroom facilities; and

- (c) lighting and seating for community use

23 Mandatory Cultural Safety Training in Sport

- (1) All sporting clubs and associations receiving state funding must provide annual cultural safety training to their staff, coaches, and officials
- (2) Training must be developed in partnership with Aboriginal-led organisations
- (3) Clubs must report annually on the number of staff trained and any incidents of racism

24 Development of Indigenous Leadership Pathways in Sport

- (1) The Minister must fund programs to train and mentor Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for leadership roles in sport, including—
 - (a) coaching and officiating; and
 - (b) sports administration and governance; and
 - (c) board and committee membership

25 Wraparound Services for Indigenous Youth in Sport

- (1) All state-supported Indigenous youth sporting programs must offer wraparound support, including—
 - (a) transport assistance to training and games; and
 - (b) integration with local health and education services; and
 - (c) family engagement incentives to improve youth retention and wellbeing

26 Program Oversight

- (1) The Cultural Representative Empowerment Council will be responsible for the implementation of initiatives within Part 4.

27 Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

- (1) The Department of Sport must publish an annual report on Indigenous participation in sport, which includes—
 - (a) voucher redemption statistics disaggregated by region; and
 - (b) program outcomes and retention rates; and
 - (c) incidents of racism and club compliance with training requirements
- (2) Reports must be tabled in Parliament and made available to the public online

Division 2 Health

28 Funding and Expanding Aboriginal-Led Healthcare Programs

- (1) The Minister for Health must establish a dedicated funding stream for Aboriginal-led healthcare programs across NSW, wherein—

- (a) funding must prioritise community-controlled health organisations; and
- (b) the allocation of such funding should be allocated through multi-year grants with a minimum term of three years; and
- (c) programs must demonstrate cultural appropriateness and alignment with local health priorities, gauged through regular consultations with community members

29 Rural Healthcare Infrastructure and Cultural Safety

- (1) The Minister for Health must prioritise investment in healthcare facilities in rural and regional Aboriginal communities, where infrastructure may include but is not limited to—
 - (a) community health clinics with culturally safe design; and
 - (b) telehealth facilities to improve access to specialists; and
 - (c) mobile health units for remote communities in NSW; and
- (2) All healthcare facilities receiving state funding must provide annual safety training for all staff, developed in partnership with Aboriginal-led organisations
- (3) Facilities must report annually on training completion rates as well as any reported incidents surrounding cultural sensitivity or racism

30 Substance Use Prevention and Support for Aboriginal Communities

- (1) The Minister must implement a comprehensive strategy to prevent substance misuse and support recovery in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- (2) The strategy must include culturally informed prevention, early intervention, and treatment programs, including but not limited to—
 - (a) youth-focused education campaigns co-designed with local Aboriginal leaders; and
 - (b) community-led outreach services addressing alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use; and
 - (c) access to culturally safe counselling, rehabilitation, and aftercare programs
- (3) Services must be delivered in partnership with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and local Elders.
- (4) Programs must reflect the social, historical, and cultural context of substance use within each community.
- (5) The Minister must ensure regular monitoring and public reporting on program outcomes, including community engagement, service access rates, and health impacts.

Part 6 Environment

31 Change in Regulation of the Native Title Act

- (6) The Cultural Representative Empowerment Council (CREC) must review all existing Native Title arrangements with the purpose of recommending improvements to land management and use that align with the four Pillars outlined in this Act.
- (7) All future developments on Native Title land must be reviewed by the CREC to ensure
 - (a) the development delivers a clear economic benefit to First Nations Peoples through at least one of the following—
 - (i) employment creation; or
 - (ii) enterprise partnerships with Indigenous businesses; or
 - (iii) leasing or licensing agreements with equitable revenue sharing
 - (b) free, prior, and informed consent is obtained from relevant Native Title holders through culturally appropriate consultation and co-design

32 Change in Regulation of Cultural Burning in Rural and Regional Areas

- (1) Change to 1997 Rural Fires Act (NSW) to legalise cultural burning in rural and regional areas, in partnership with the Rural Fire Service
- (2) A First Nations Youth Cultural Learning Group program shall be established to involve young people to participate in cultural burning, under the supervision of the Rural Fire Service

Part 7 Cultural Representative Empowerment Council (CREC)

33 Establishment of the Cultural Representative Empowerment Council

- (1) The Cultural Representative Empowerment Council (CREC) is established to—
 - (a) centralise, coordinate and assume the responsibilities of any oversight and advisory duties referenced in this Act; and
 - (b) provide binding decisions, approvals, and oversight on matters established under the pillars of this Act; and
 - (c) ensure culturally grounded co-design and co-design-based service delivery across all relevant sectors and policies.

34 Composition

- (1) The Council shall comprise of—
 - (a) 12 elected First Nations Youth representatives aged 16 - 25; and
 - (b) 6 elected First Nations Elders from regional, rural, and metropolitan

(2) Elections will be coordinated by an independent Aboriginal electoral body and held biennially.

(3) Gender parity and inter-regional representation must be upheld.

35 Powers and Functions

(1) The CREC will be responsible for the advisory, reporting, and oversight of all programs and initiatives referenced under this Act with binding authority.

(2) Government departments must seek and comply with CREC recommendations and approvals across all applicable policies and developments.

36 Operations

(1) The full CREC must convene at least twice per year.

(2) Subcommittees must be formed for key domains including—

(a) justice; and

(b) youth advocacy; and

(c) economic prosperity; and

(d) health and sport; and

(e) environment

(3) Each subcommittee must meet at least six times per year and report to the full Council.

(4) Both subcommittees and Council meetings are to be held on Country and conducted in accordance with Council-defined cultural protocols.

Schedule 1 Definitions

Base Amount refers to the standard grant or funding amount allocated to programs in metropolitan, urban or suburban areas.

Circle Sentencing is a community-based sentencing method involving Elders, victims, offenders, and justice system professionals to deliver culturally appropriate justice outcomes.

Cultural Burning refers to a traditional First Nations fire practice used for land management, biodiversity, and cultural purposes, guided by First Nations Knowledge Systems.

Cultural Competency is a training program that increased awareness, knowledge, and skills for working respectfully and effectively with First Nations Peoples, developed in partnership with those communities.

Cultural Enterprise and Skills Certificate refers to a Year 12 equivalent qualification that integrates cultural knowledge and enterprise skills, co-designed by First Nations stakeholders.

Elders refers to a respected senior member of a First Nations community who are often recognised for the knowledge, leadership, and guidance towards younger generations.

First Nations Business and Skills Pathway Initiative is a NSW Government initiative to support business, employment, and vocational training for First Nations Youth.

First Nations Communities refers to First Nations language or geographical groups set out as per AIATSIS.

First Nations-Led Organisations refers to an organisation that is governed and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

First Nations Youth refers to any person that is under the age of 18 and identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

In-School First Nations Advisory Group refers to a collective of three (3) or more students within a secondary school that—

- (a) engages in advocacy work relating to issues facing First Nations Youth among other issues or provide support or resources to First Nations students; and
- (b) meets once per month or more frequently; and
- (c) operates with the approval of the school; and

(d) facilitates school-based cultural empowerment programs

Local First Nations Governance Body refers to a recognised Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisation responsible for representing local community interests.

Native Title Land refers to land or waters where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have legal recognition of traditional rights and interests under the Native Title Act 1993 (Cth) and relevant NSW legislation.

Regional refers to areas outside metropolitan centres, as defined by NSW Government planning zones.

Remand is the detention of a person in custody while awaiting trial or sentencing.

Rural and Remote refers to communities significantly distant from metropolitan areas, with limited access to services and infrastructure, including Aboriginal Communities.

School-Based Vocational Programs refers to apprenticeships, traineeships, or similar work-based learning pathways integrated into school education for First Nations Youth.

Start-Up Grant Program refers to a government-funded program that provides financial support to First Nations Youth to establish culturally appropriate and community-serving businesses.

Wraparound Services means a comprehensive support service that addresses a young persons' social, educational, and health needs.

Youth Koori Court is a specialised division of the Children's Court of New South Wales designed to provide culturally appropriate court processes for First Nations Youth.

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