

Lessons from the transition of HIPPY to local First Nations providers

With humility, we share these learnings from the HIPPY transition journey not as experts, but as fellow learners. We recognise that many communities and organisations have been leading this work long before us and offer these reflections in the spirit of collective learning, hoping they may be useful to others navigating similar journeys of change and partnership.



HIPPY is a free home-based early learning and parenting program operating in up to 100 sites in Australia, including **50 First Nations focused sites**.

Delivered in partnerships with **local providers**, including **32 ACCOs**, HIPPY supports children’s early learning while building parents’ confidence to be their child’s first teacher.

HIPPY’s site level transition

In 2022, BSL committed to growing First Nations leadership and delivery, aligning with the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and the Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023–2026.

A dedicated transition project was established and operated in 2024 and 2025 to transition HIPPY First Nations focused sites to ACCO delivery. This project was governed by the HIPPY Transition to ACCOs Project Advisory Committee, along with SNAICC as a key partner and independent facilitator. The transition project was guided by community consultation, ensuring local voices lead the decision-making every step of the way.

Aim

The Transition to ACCOs project aimed to strengthen self-determination by supporting First Nations-focused HIPPY sites to move to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation delivery or ACCO-led partnerships. It sought to strengthen First Nations leadership and place cultural authority, community voices and local priorities at the centre of service delivery. This supports work with children, families and communities that is grounded in cultural knowledge, strengthens identity and belonging, and reflects local priorities, strengths and aspirations.

Transition methodology

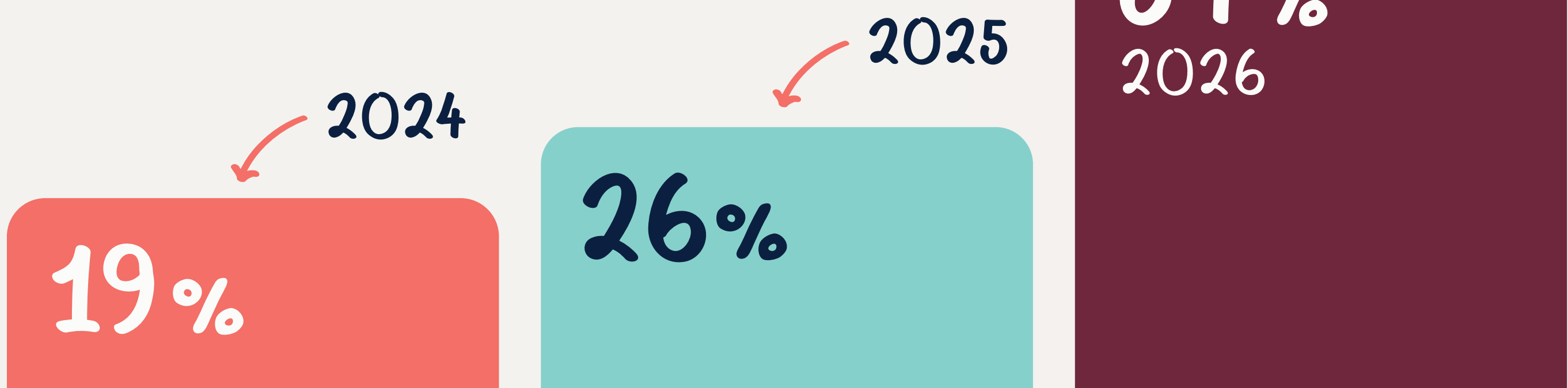
Co-designed with ACCOs, the transition process followed 5 structured stages. These stages supported incoming and outgoing HIPPY providers to work together effectively, maintain program continuity for families and centre local decision-making and respectful relationships.



Impact we have already seen: First Nations leadership on the ground

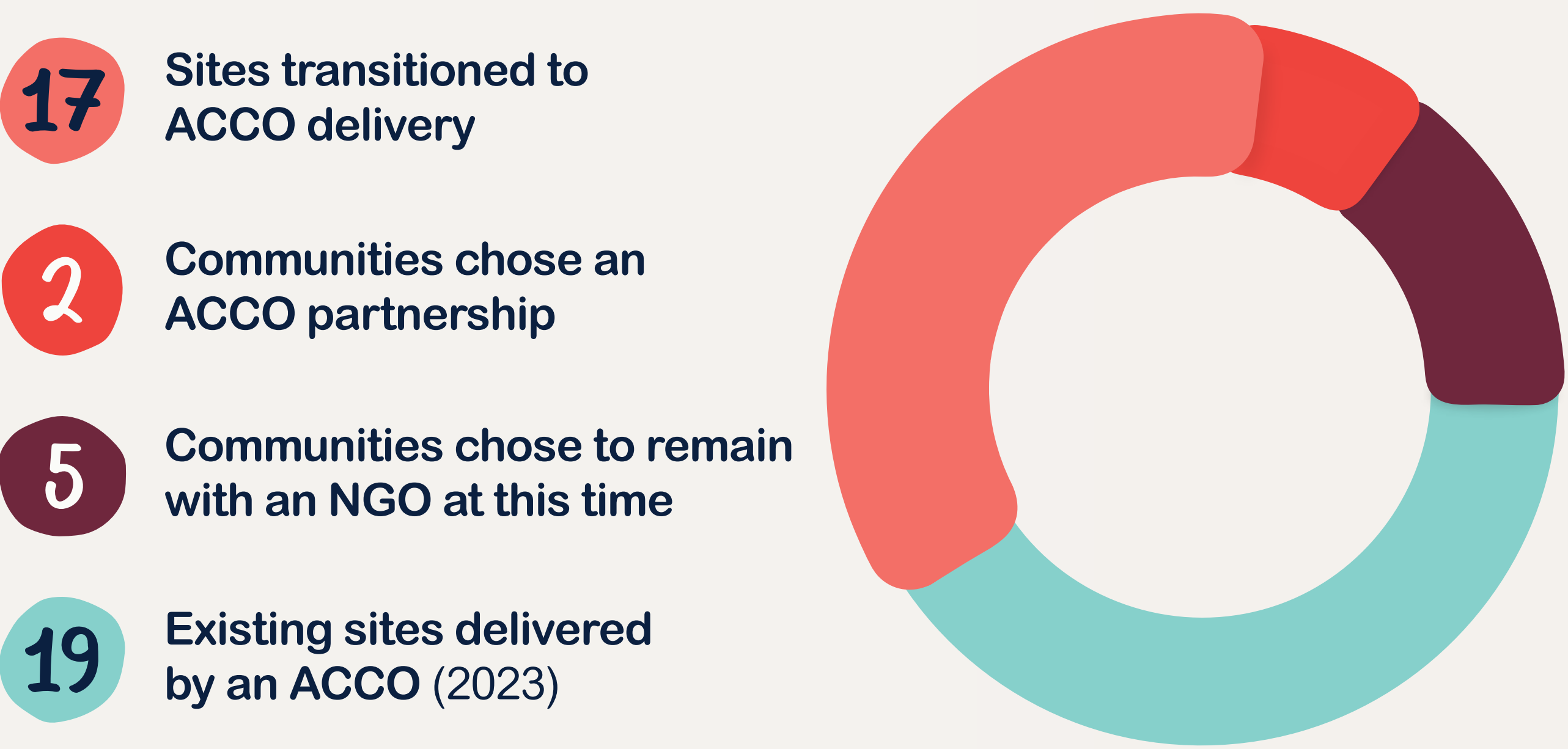
Across transition sites, First Nations leadership has grown through both community-controlled governance and local workforce participation. Where individuals have chosen to identify as First Nations, more parents are now employed as Tutors, bringing lived experience, local knowledge and strong community connections to their work with families. This reflects the many ways leadership is expressed in community, not only through governance and decision-making, but also through the everyday relationships, cultural knowledge and support that help HIPPY thrive locally.

First Nation staff at HIPPY transition sites



Community decision-making shaping HIPPY

Community consultation shaped the transition at each site, with local communities guiding whether their HIPPY site transitioned to ACCO delivery, adopted a partnership model or remained with the existing provider.



Lessons learned

- Walking alongside and transferring power**
Power transfer requires trust, transparency and non-Indigenous organisations being willing to step back and share decision-making.
- Capacity is not capability**
Limitations in organisational capacity does not indicate a lack of capability. Long-term investment in ACCO infrastructure, systems and workforce enables First Nations organisations to establish and deliver services beyond transition.
- Invest in strength-based relationships**
Strengths-based, relational engagement, guided by cultural obligations and community rhythms, builds trust more effectively than extractive consultation.
- Self-determination needs enabling environments**
Transitions require sustained investment beyond a single funding cycle. Flexible funding, realistic timelines and performance expectations create the conditions for ACCOs and communities to lead.



In the spirit of deep respect, we acknowledge the sovereign lands of all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations on which we have walked, listened, learnt and yarned throughout the last decade and now on the HIPPY transition journey. We pay our heartfelt respects to Elders past and present, and to the young leaders who carry forward the strength, knowledge and cultural legacy of their Ancestors. We honour and pay respect to the diversity of language, cultural practice, leadership and governance that continues to thrive in local communities despite the impact of colonisation. We endeavour to walk humbly alongside community, listening deeply to the direction and decisions of Elders and community members.

Scan to read the discussion paper

