BARANG
REGIONAL ALLIANCE
Central Coast

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

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1. YAAMA MALIYAA

Vickie Parry
Executive Director

Today and for the past 50 years I have lived off Country and on Darkinyung Land. I am one of many proud Aboriginal people who have been part of the growth of this vibrant community.

The Central Coast of NSW lies on the traditional lands of the Darkinyung people and is a centre of historical significance for many tribal groups across NSW.

This is sandstone country, where the flat rocks and caves have preserved over 2,985 traditional carvings, paintings and stories and where the Darkinyung and Awaba people shared a close relationship, regularly gathering for traditional ceremonies.

The Central Coast Darkinyung Country was also a traditional meeting place for Aboriginal tribal groups including the Gomeroi, Wiradjuri, Gadigal, Worimi, Darkinyung, Awaba and Wonnarua people who gathered at Mt Yengo for ceremony and negotiations. Today, many of the first nations people from across Australia now call the Central Coast home.

The Central Coast Darkinyung Country is located on the coast of New South Wales 60 – 90 Kms north of Sydney CBD and 80 Kms south of Newcastle CBD. This in some cases puts the Central Coast and our Community at a disadvantage when resources are being distributed within regional boundaries.

For Barang Regional Alliance, it's been a notable time. The momentum of the Alliance is evident and as our work in structural reform extends and develops with Government, so does the strength of our opt-in organisations and community.

Central to this work is our unique position in the Empowered Communities area, which sees us working with Government to reform how Indigenous policies and programs are designed and delivered in our community while working alongside Local Decision Making – an initiative under OCHRE, the NSW Government's community focused plan for Aboriginal Affairs.

Barang's highlights include:

- Barang Regional Alliance Empower Youth Summit which brought together over 240 Aboriginal young people across the Central Coast over two years
- Development of Barang Regional Alliance Three-year Youth Plan
- Securing funding for the first Aboriginal safe space for young people and families connecting our community
- Several Community forums rolled out across the Central Coast, engaging the local Aboriginal community to capture their voices.
- Commencement of the formal Accord negotiations with the State Government.
- Setting up and running Joint Decision-Making panels to work with community and the Federal Government around Indigenous Advancement Strategy funding in our region.
- Opportunities with Empowered Communities to engage with the Aboriginal Affairs Minister Ken Wyatt to discuss our reform agenda, achievements and concerns.
- Continued input into the National Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances NCARA– Accord negotiations with senior representatives from Government agencies

We are forging successful relationships with State and Federal Government representatives, which is shaping the establishment of formal networks to discuss shared achievements, challenges and opportunities for collaboration.

Barang Regional Alliance acknowledge the hard work of our opt-in organisations, Bara Barang Corporation, Gudjagang Ngara Li-dhi, The Glen, Mingaletta Aboriginal Corporation, NAISDA, Yerin Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Health Services Ltd and our community – this work would not be possible without them as the voices driving change.

As we progress through the Regional Development Agenda the journey of change will be challenging however, I am confident the Barang Regional Alliance member directors, community and our staff will continue to work together to meet agreed priorities and remain key influencers of structural reform through Empowered Communities and Local Decision Making.

2. OUR VISION FOR THE CENTRAL COAST – EMPOWERING ABORIGINAL PEOPLE THROUGH A UNIFIED VOICE

Our vision for our Aboriginal community's future drives our ambition. Our leaders and our communities want change.

We have a plan for our future that builds our capabilities, to retain our culture and create stronger relationships within our community and partners. We want systems change to deliver more effective service delivery outcomes and accountability to the Central Coast Aboriginal community.

We believe in Aboriginal-led responsibility, collaboration, innovation and best practice sharing, and acknowledge the cultural authority of our people.

We have committed to, and begun working together, to share our experience and knowledge, and to develop solutions to the problems and challenges we face.

We have a shared set of principles based on the following views.

- Community and Government programs must support Aboriginal-led decision making.
- Innovation is essential and will be built into program design – we will learn and adapt as we go.
- Sharing good practices and ensuring results are delivered and celebrated.

For the mutual benefit of our Central Coast Aboriginal community we need Government to partner with us – to be enablers in reform because we are in this together. Structural reform requires that all levels of Government work with us to deliver on our priorities. Additionally, there are four key development objectives that inform our Regional Development Agenda.

- Structural reform.
- Aboriginal-led decision making and partnerships.
- Tailored services based on need.
- Regionally-driven investment.

3. WHO WE ARE – CENTRAL COAST – UNDERSTANDING OUR SUB-REGIONS

The Central Coast of New South Wales is home to one of Australia's fastest growing population of Aboriginal people.

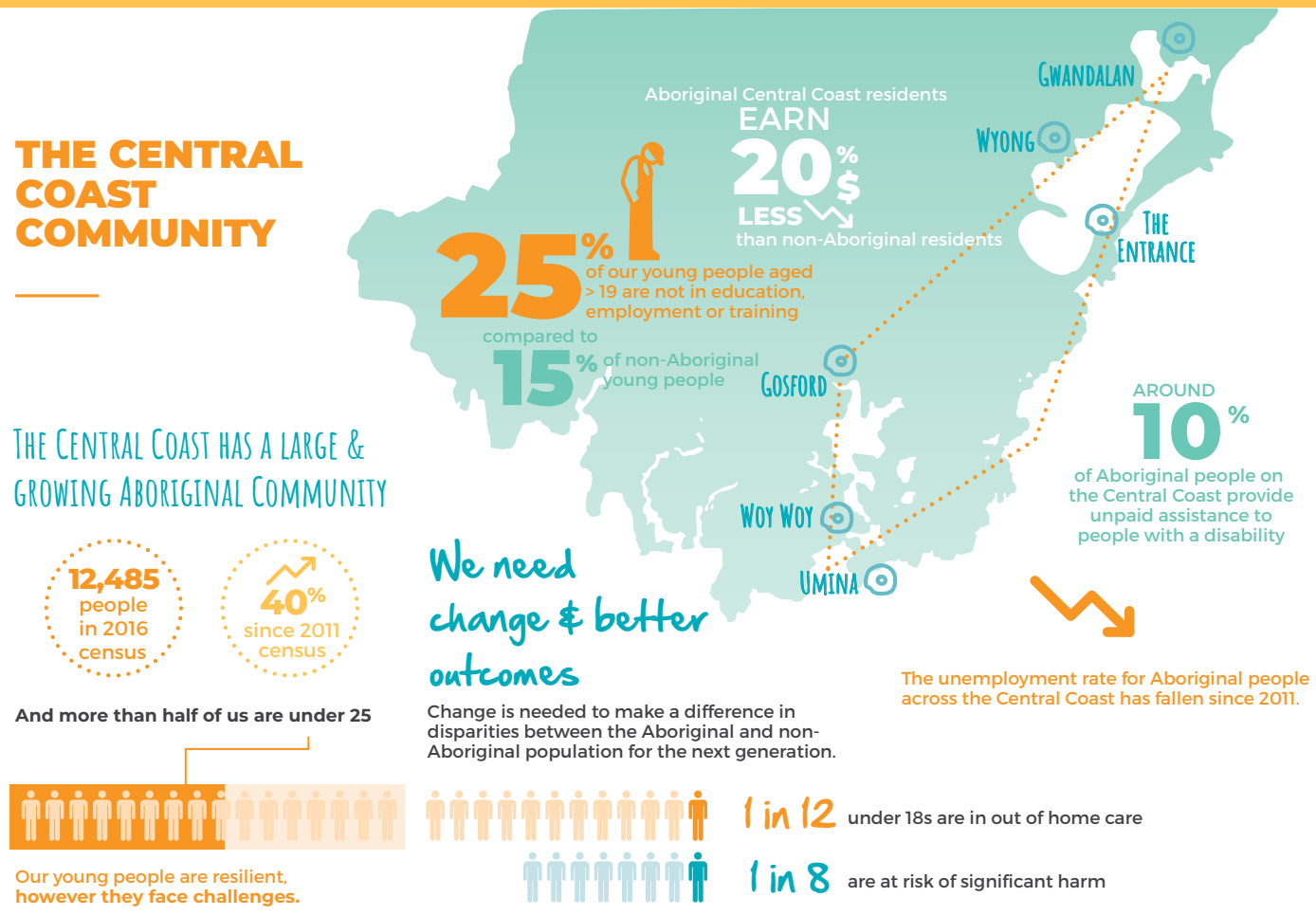
The Central Coast region is bound by the Pacific Ocean to the east, the Hawkesbury River to the south, the Watagan Mountains to the west and the southern end of Lake Macquarie to the north. The region is home to the Darkinyung Aboriginal nation.

The Central Coast region is home to an Aboriginal population of 12,485 people which represents 3.8% of the total population 327,736. One of the defining features of the Aboriginal population is the low median age, with 56% of the population under the age of 24.

Between the age of 12-14 years the gender split is skewed with 15% more boys than girls in this age group. There is significant drop of 23% in the population amongst the 20-24 years old, indicative of a mobile population leaving the region to seek employment upon leaving school. The Indigenous unemployment rate is 13.9%* compared to 6.5% for the Non-Indigenous population.

The region is dominated by water ways, with the landscape featuring three large inland lakes – Munmorah, Tuggerah and Brisbane Waters, flowing out to the Pacific Ocean. The spread of the population around these lakes creates a 'population diamond', with the following:

- Left – Wyong.
- Top – Gwandalan.
- Right – The Entrance.
- Centre – Gosford.
- Bottom – The Peninsula.



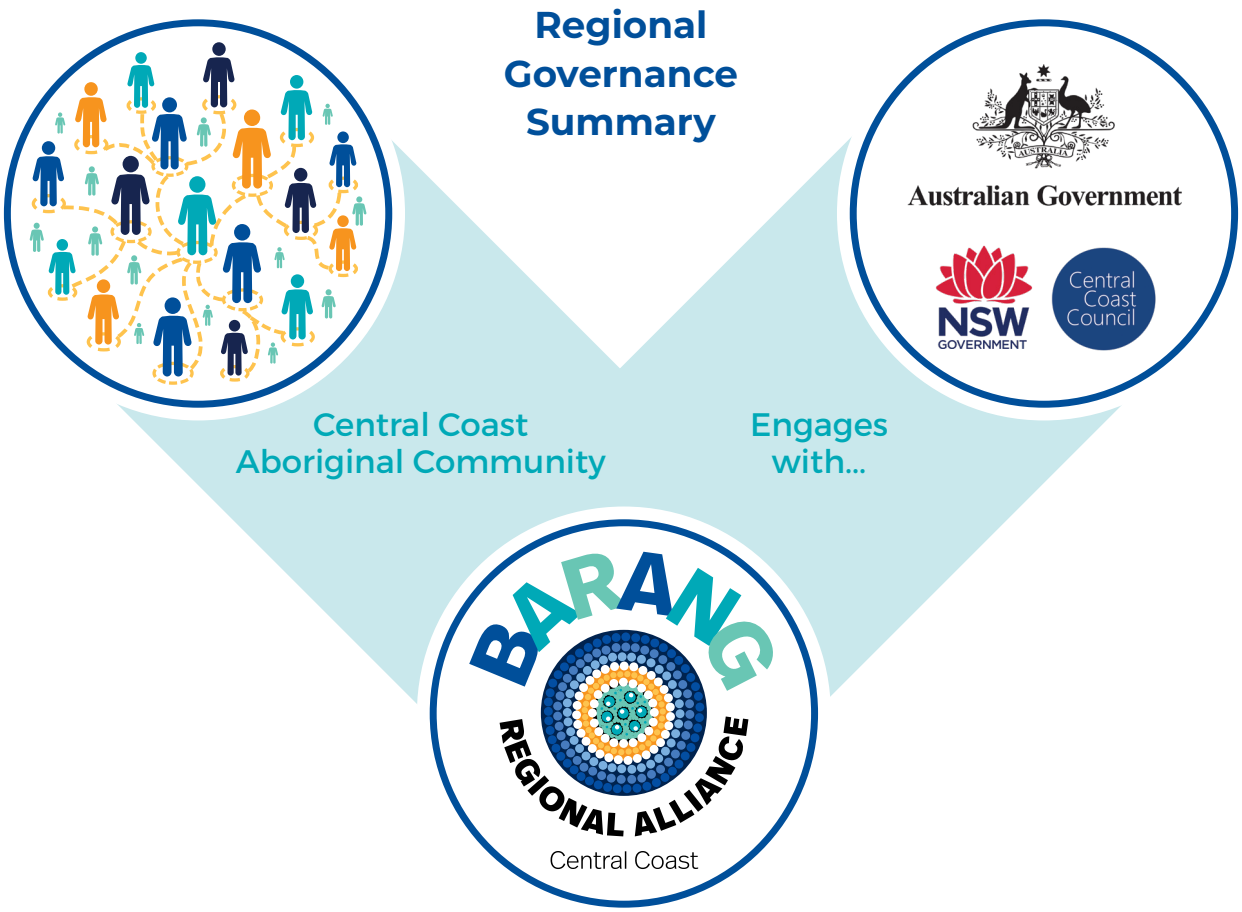
4. REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

We have worked hard on our governance arrangements to ensure that it is representative of our people and robust enough to deliver on both Empowered Communities and Local Decision Making. It is a big job and we are already working on it.

The Barang Regional Alliance is unique. We have been funded by both the Commonwealth and State Governments since 2016. The Commonwealth Government has funded Empowered Communities and the State has funded Local Decision Making. Both aim to drive significant reforms that deliver better outcomes for Aboriginal people using an Aboriginal-led, Government enabled approach.

Barang Regional Alliance was established in 2016 to facilitate and drive our reforms. We are continuing to build our opt-in base and our community membership. We continue to talk to people to ensure that what they are telling us about what is important to them underpins our planning, and is retested with them. We continue to run consultations and have surveyed over 4,000 people to ensure that we know what the priorities are for our people – we know because they have told us!

We are engaging with Commonwealth and State Government as an enabling partner. This is critical. This means that we need Government to share the workload so that we can shift power into the hands of local Aboriginal people. This will, over time, bring real change for Aboriginal people on the Central Coast and improve the future for all our people. We are leading and we need Governments to participate as partners.



5. OUR WAY – THE CENTRAL COAST APPROACH TO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

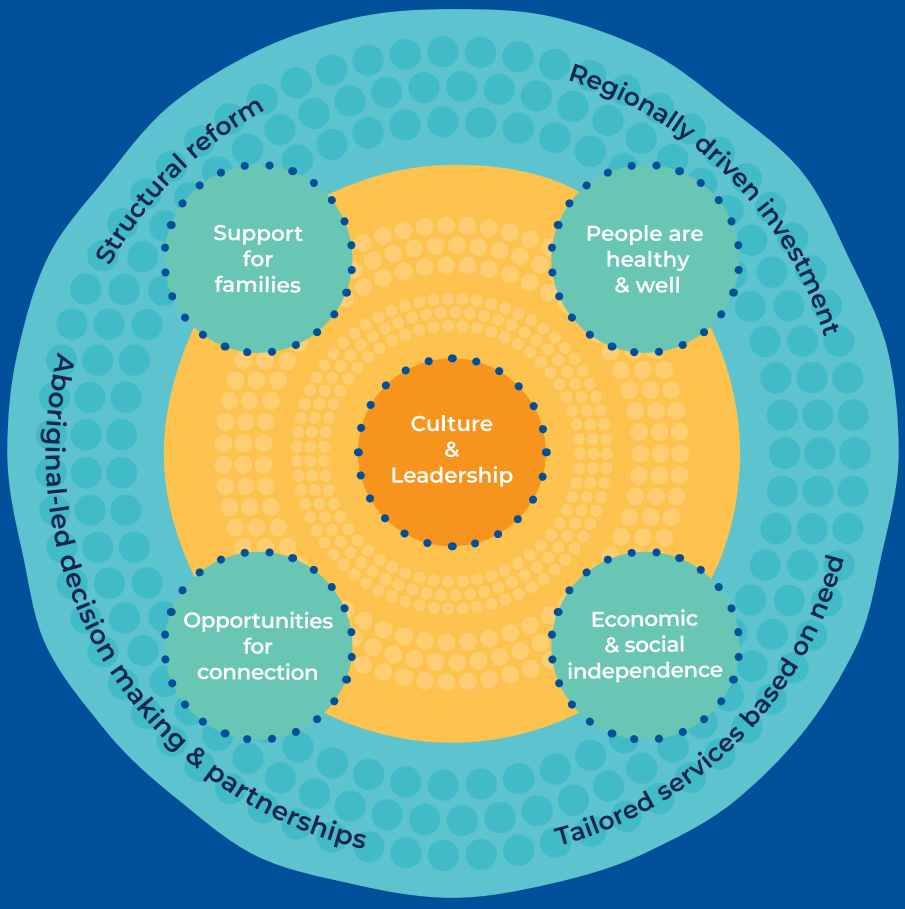
Our Regional Development Agenda reflects the voices of Aboriginal people across the Central Coast by describing our priorities and how we intend to achieve them.

Our region has a multi-layered network of community and Government services and providers, which is further complicated by the fact that we also sit across a number of service boundaries between Sydney and Newcastle.

Mapping funding that is applied to the Central Coast is complex. From our consultations, we know that Aboriginal people are seeking empowerment to make choices about their lives. A majority of the funding is focused less on capacity building and more on short-term responses. We want to turn that around to support our priorities, needs and development agenda to improve the lives of all Aboriginal people in the region.

Our ongoing consultations have told us that we want culture and leadership at the centre of our Regional Development Agenda. Sitting alongside this are four key development priorities:

1. **People are healthy and well:** We have the skills to care for ourselves and nurture our families. We have the services that meet those needs.
2. **Opportunities for connection:** We can have access to safe spaces that will enable cultural learning and connections to community.
3. **Economic and social independence:** Providing economic pathways for community, organisations and individuals.
4. **Support for families:** We have access to culturally appropriate supports that strengthen our families.



6. OUR PLAN – CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL PLAN

We have identified six initiatives in those four domains described above which are:

- **Right to cultural learning**
- **Regional Aboriginal Data Network**
- **Mental health**
- **Economic pathways for community, organisations and individuals**
- **Youth leadership and school transition**
- **Aligning funding to community needs**

We have started to co-design with our Government partners and progress our implementation planning.

More details on this are in the following pages.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL PLAN

PRIORITY AREA – RIGHT TO CULTURAL LEARNING

Rationale

Community has told us that there is a need for culturally safe spaces for young people and their families to access across the Central Coast.

These spaces will enable the delivery of a range culturally appropriate community services including family support, health, wellbeing, education, employment, cultural connection, legal and counselling services.

Culturally safe spaces are vital for Aboriginal children, youth and their families to move forward and build their social and economic capacity and independence.

Outcomes

- Wyong Aboriginal Community Hub established
- Commitment to establish further Aboriginal community hubs across Central Coast

Partners

- Barang Regional Alliance
- New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- New South Wales Government Local Decision Making partners
  - Department of Health
  - Department of Education
  - Department of Community & Justice
- National Indigenous Australians Agency
- Gudjagang Ngara Li-dhi (GNL) for Wyong Hub
- Mingaletta for Umina Hub
- Bara Barang for Gosford Hub

Timeframe

- Wyong Hub funded 2019
- To follow:
  - Umina Hub
  - Gosford Hub

Next Steps

- Ongoing New South Wales Government LDM Accord negotiation process – continue to progress Statement of Claim priority for the funding and support of the Community Hubs proposal
- Support GNL to establish Wyong Hub building and service delivery by GNL, Barang Opt-Ins and regional service delivery organisation.
- Develop a shared measurement framework to underpin expansion of culturally safe spaces to two other sites in the region.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL PLAN

PRIORITY AREA – REGIONAL ABORIGINAL DATA NETWORK

Rationale

Our community organisations have consistently expressed concern about the quality and accuracy of data about the Aboriginal community.

Community organisations have told us that we need sovereignty of the data that accurately represents our community. This means strengthening community skills in data collection, management and communication.

We want to be able to tell stories about our people and the services and programs they use but we need accurate data to do that and we need to build our capacity to understand and interpret it.

We need a structure that supports community skill building and access to data to inform decision making and service delivery.

Outcomes

- Central Coast Aboriginal Data Network established.
- Regional baseline dataset established through collection of existing data, identification of gaps and development of local collection mechanisms.
- Central Coast organisations empowered through access and ownership of our data.
- Data management skills enhanced amongst Central Coast Data Network

Partners

- Barang Regional Alliance
- Indigenous Data Network
- University of Melbourne
- New South Wales Government LDM partners
  - Department of Health
  - Department of Education
  - Department of Community & Justice
- Jawun
- ABS
- AIHW
- Federal NIAA
- Central Coast Council
- Wollatuka Institute Uni Newcastle

Timeframe

- June 2022

Next Steps

- Develop data literacy skills to support achieving sovereignty
- Engage Empowered Communities Central Data Manager to work together to:
  - consolidate existing data – held amongst Opt-In organisations (and CC Data Network members)
  - identify gaps in existing data
- Establish Central Coast Data Network – consultations with Opt-Ins and Indigenous service providers in region.
- Identify pathways for communication of key data stories for our community.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL PLAN

PRIORITY AREA – MENTAL HEALTH

Rationale

Mental health is the number one health and wellbeing concern for young people across the community.

Key issues include a lack of culturally appropriate and responsive services, gaps in services and an absence of coordination across funding.

Aboriginal mental health issues are unique and specific, informed by intergenerational trauma, multiple morbidities, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), issues around identity and connection to culture.

Outcomes

- Achieving improved wellness outcomes for the Aboriginal community on the Central Coast through:
  - funding of existing culturally appropriate mental health services that are currently unfunded
  - enhancing existing services
  - increasing funding and resourcing for mental health services
  - improving access pathways for mental health services
  - accountability of mainstream mental health services for effectiveness of Indigenous mental health service delivery

Partners

- Yerin
- Barang Regional Alliance
- University Placements
- Headspace
- Jawun
- CCLHD

Timeframe

- 2021

Next Steps

- Develop Implementation plan to include:
  - Establishing mental health working group including existing mental health service providers and community members
  - Developing mental health consultation strategy

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL PLAN

PRIORITY AREA – ECONOMIC PATHWAYS *Community | Business & Organisations | Individuals*

Rationale

An economic pathway starting with education, leading on to jobs and being able to participate in business and commerce is our priority.

This will provide a real future for Aboriginal people living on Darkinyung country and most importantly the means to participate in the mainstream economy.

Barang's role is an enabler and facilitator of this within the region.

Outcomes

- Opportunities to attain economic and social independence through culturally supported initiatives for community and the wider Australian economy.
- **Community**
  - Redirect funding to effective use through Joint Decision Making
  - Identify and facilitate partnerships
  - Facilitate opportunities that are available in the region for community
- **Business and Organisations**
  - Increased business resilience through diversification of business services
- **Individuals**
  - Trauma informed services
  - Financial literacy training
  - Employment support
  - Developing school leaver pathways

Partners

- Bara Barang – Dream Builders in School
- Bara Barang
- Regional Development Australia
- Department of Industry
- Department of Roads and Maritime
- Richard Crookes Construction
- Other business partners

Timeframe

- Joint Decision Making Process
  - Round One by end of 2019
- Bara Barang – MoU

Next Steps

- Implementation plan – economic pathways
- Bara Barang to establish MoU with Richard Crookes Construction for Indigenous Employment for Wyong Hospital upgrade

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL PLAN

PRIORITY AREA – YOUTH LEADERSHIP & SCHOOL TRANSITIONS

Rationale

The Central Coast Aboriginal community has a large and growing youth cohort – with 56% of the population under 24 years old.

The unemployment rate for young Aboriginal people is as high as 39% in areas on the Central Coast and sustained population growth and limited employment and training options are contributing to the vulnerability of young people.

Our community tells us that there is a lack of genuine transition pathways for young Aboriginal people leaving school.

Outcomes

- Empowerment and aspiration developed through pathways of choice for our young people – including genuine training and career progression options and exposure.
- Reduction of Aboriginal youth unemployment rate.
- Employers understand the diverse needs of our young people entering the workforce.

Partners

- Local decision making partners:
  - Department of Aboriginal Affairs
  - Department of Premier and Cabinet
  - Bara Barang
  - Department of Education
  - GNL
  - Job Active

Timeframe

- 2020

Next Steps

- Finalise Central Coast Youth Leadership program and funding strategy
- Implementation plan to include:
  - Developing employment sector
  - Defining supports to Aboriginal young people entering employment e.g. culturally appropriateness readiness checklist
  - Identifying appropriate training options e.g. including workplace mentoring

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL PLAN

PRIORITY AREA – ALIGNING FUNDING TO COMMUNITY NEED

Rationale

Government funded (supply) driven investment models do not include the Indigenous voice in decision making.

Current commission of Aboriginal service delivery is not transparent and lacks accountability.

Outcomes

Alignment and coordination of EC and LDM approach to complete community led assessment of Indigenous service delivery effectiveness.

Genuine partnership between service providers and Aboriginal community.

Indigenous services providers held accountable for effectiveness and appropriateness of services delivered to community.

Local Aboriginal people feel empowered and included in decision making regarding funding and service provision.

Partners

- National Indigenous Australians Agency
- Barang Board
- Community Panel
- New South Wales Government Local Decision Making Agencies

Timeframe

- December 2019

Next Steps

- Bring federal Government to the Local Decision Making negotiating table – leverage existing Services Australia relationship.
- Complete delivery of the first round of Joint Decision Making (JDM) community evaluation on the Central Coast. If model proves effective, complete on other IAS contracts.
- Seek to expand JDM process to other federal funding.
- Continue to progress Local Decision Making through the Accord Negotiations – including establishing a Joint Decision Making model for community evaluation.

7. UNDERSTANDING CHANGE – MONITORING, EVALUATION AND ADAPTATION

The Barang Regional Alliance is testing two significant parallel place-based economic and social reforms with Empowered Communities and Local Decision Making. We need to understand how the community is impacted by these reforms and to learn lessons from their implementation.

By developing and embedding a robust Monitoring, Evaluation and Adaptation framework that enables us to 'learn by doing', we will have evidence that helps us to understand what is working, to change plans if what we are doing isn't leading where we wanted it to and to better monitor outcomes for our people. It provides a 'line-of-sight' to inform community decision making and build our capacity to understand what works.

This framework comprises five key elements:

- Identification of a baseline population level dataset to provide a measure of change over the long-term.
- A theory of change and program logic that identifies measurable outputs based on the six priority areas.
- Building on our existing community survey data, aligning it to identify progress against the outcomes we have identified in our program logic.
- Schedules for qualitative data collection methods which will augment survey and other data that is collected and that are complementary to local community survey mechanisms.
- Stakeholder engagement plans including timing of communication of program implementation to community and other program partners.
- A data management plan to ensure that data is managed in a way that supports data confidentiality and privacy principles.

To implement this Monitoring, Evaluation and Adaptation framework, Barang Regional Alliance will also continue to build capacity by:

- Developing a data and evaluation capacity development strategy.
- Sourcing capacity building champions and data and evaluation experts through the Regional Aboriginal Data Network.
- Linking with the Indigenous Productivity Commissioner – to understand and seek opportunities to use their resources for data collection.

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