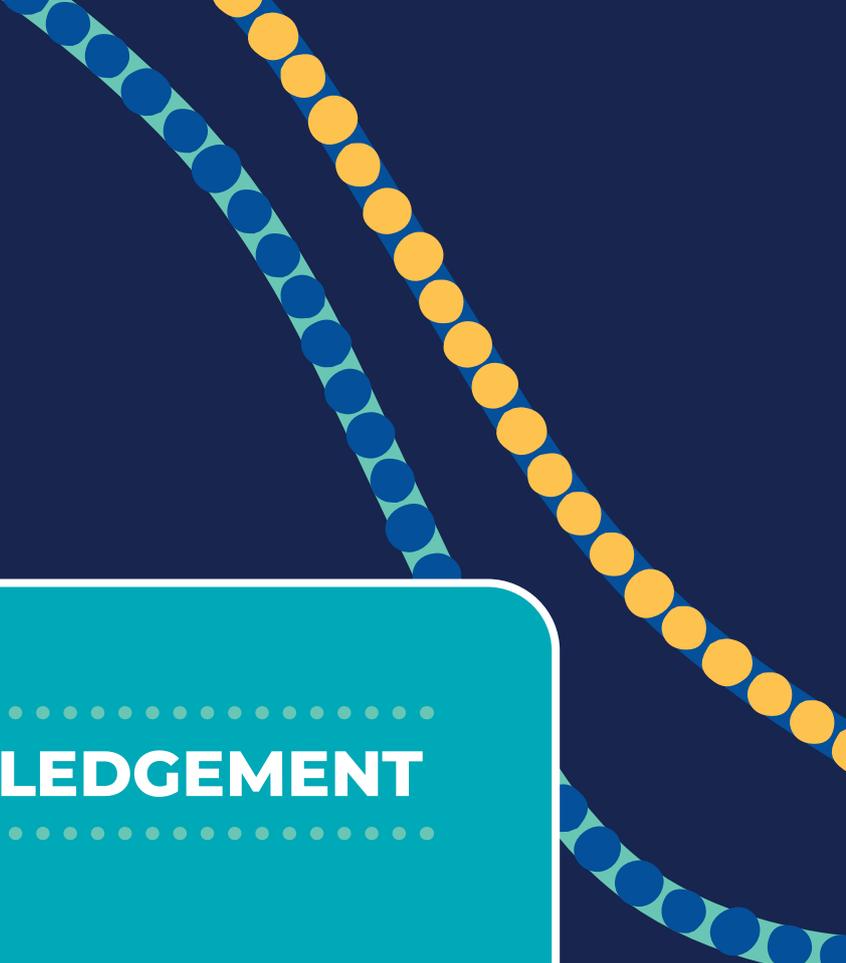




SUBMISSION TO THE INDIGENOUS VOICE CO-DESIGN PROCESS: INTERIM REPORT TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

Barang Regional Alliance
96 Pacific Highway, Wyong, NSW



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Barang Regional Alliance acknowledges and pays respect to our ancestors – those who have gone before us - those who have cared for and managed these lands, seas and waterways for generations.

We pay respect to the Darkinyung people, whose land we operate and function on. We recognise and acknowledge all Aboriginal people who have come from their own Country and who now call Darkinjung Land home.

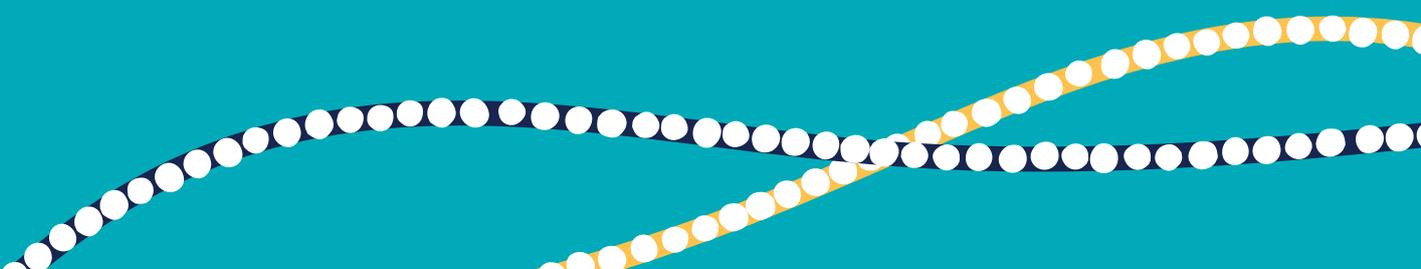
We pay tribute to our Elders past and present - we acknowledge our youth and emerging leaders who are our future guardians of Country, culture, language, and truth.

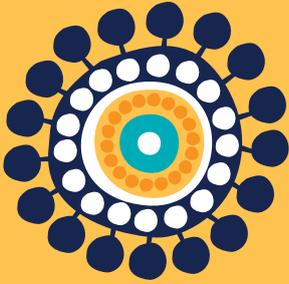


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FOREWORD/INTRODUCTION

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Barang Regional Alliance is the regional representative structure established in 2013 by the Central Coast Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and its associated Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations.

The Central Coast of New South Wales – traditional lands of the Darkinjung people - is located in approximately 1.5 hours north of Sydney, and approximately 1.5 hours south of Newcastle.

We are a mature region that boasts a strong, dynamic, and diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population with well-established regional governance, community structure, protocols, custodians and Traditional Owners.

Barang Regional Alliance is the first regional governance structure in Australia to successfully negotiate on an agreed reform agenda with both Commonwealth and New South Wales Governments, through our involvement with Empowered Communities (federally) and Local Decision Making (State).

Our region is the fastest growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Australia – with a conservative estimate of 12,465 people occupying a geographical footprint of 1,681 square kilometres. Our region has, and continues to be, overlooked by all tiers of government.

Barang Regional Alliance has assisted in the planning, development and co-ordination of ongoing community consultations including, but not limited to, playing an instrumental role in having a “Voice” consultation on the Central Coast.

With the support of our community, this submission seeks for the Central Coast to be recognised and included as a stand-alone and district region in the regional voice framework

We believe that the oversight of our region could be the first of many cascading blows to follow if the Central Coast is not adequately represented and our voices heard.¹

¹ Central Coast Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community submission to the Indigenous Voice process



CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION



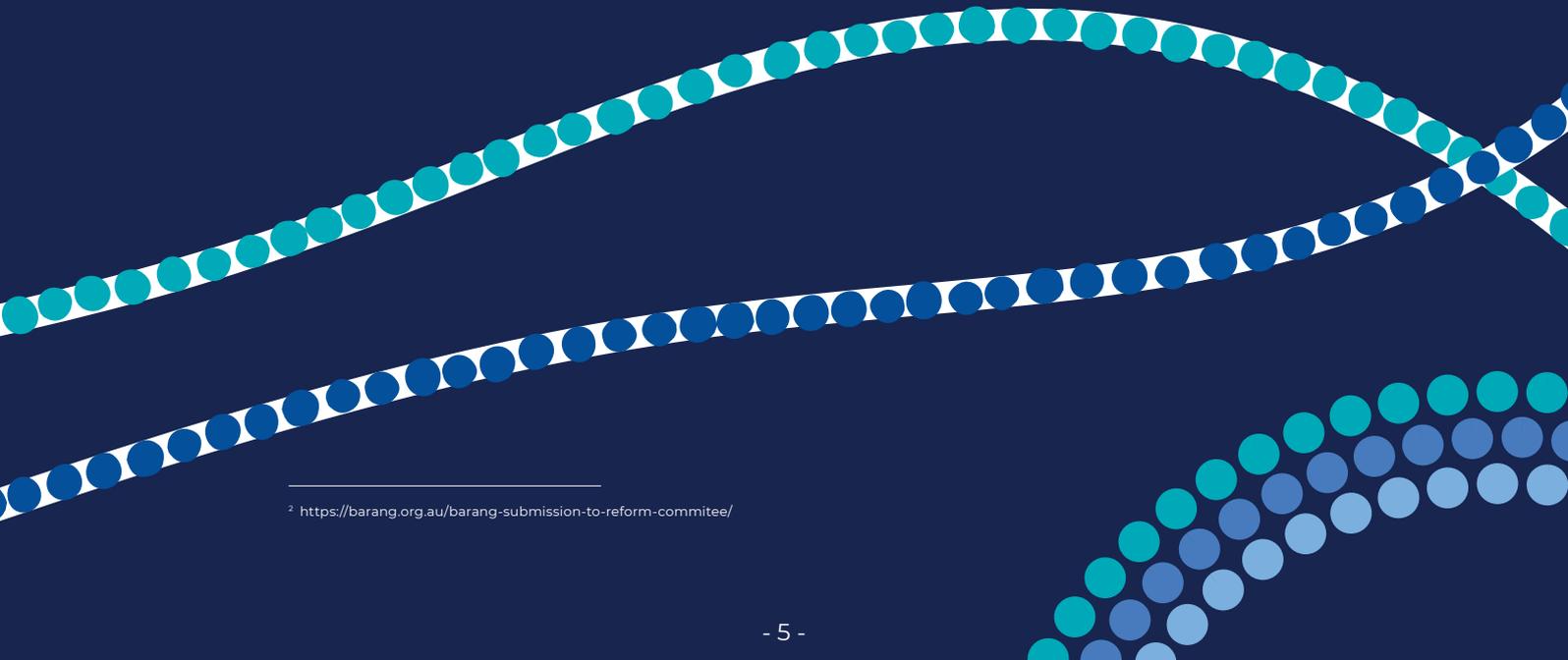
On the 13th of June 2018, Barang Regional Alliance made a submission to the Joint Select Committee, specifically in relation to constitutional recognition. In this, we tabled our support for the reforms proposed in the Uluru Statement, because, to date, they are the only reforms with Indigenous backing.

Barang Regional Alliance does not support constitutional amendment that is either minimalist or purely symbolic - Constitutional recognition must be both substantive and practical.²

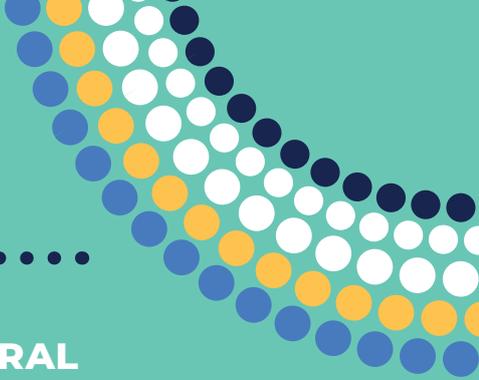
Further to this, we are in support of the proposed reforms because they will empower our people to take responsibility in our own affairs. This aligns with our 'empowerment' agenda – enabling our local community to make local decisions. A First Nations voice should be designed in collaboration with Indigenous people ensuring that it supports regional and local empowerment.

Further work must now be done to put forward the key priorities as outlined in the Uluru Statement and the Referendum Council's report, namely: a constitutionally guaranteed voice for the First Nations, a Makarrata Commission to supervise agreement-making and truth-telling, and a Declaration of Recognition.

Barang Regional Alliance doubts that the sequencing of the current voice to government will reflect what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been asking for. We support change, in the form of both constitutional recognition and legislative backing, acknowledging that both are required to enable a partnership. This will serve to solve the problems that both governments and Indigenous people agree require solutions, and can be enacted in legislation, so that subsequent changes to the details of the Voice model are able to make as required.



² <https://barang.org.au/barang-submission-to-reform-committee/>



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WHO WE REPRESENT - OUR REGION: DARKINJUNG COUNTRY - THE NSW CENTRAL COAST ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

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The Darkinjung (Central Coast) region is home to the Darkinjung Aboriginal nation. The Darkinjung region is bound by the southern end of Lake Macquarie (*Lake Awaba*) to the North, The McDonald River and Wollombi (up to the sacred Mountain of Yengo and including the Watagan mountains) in the West, the Pacific Ocean to the East, and the Hawkesbury River (*Deerubbin*) to the South. This region is extremely unique, with one of the highest densities of culturally significant sites in Australia, with over 2,985 registered sites.³

There are many different kinds of totems (skin, clan and personal) that relate to the Central Coast. Many of which are able to be seen in our cultural sites and local rock art which has been preserved in a pristine manner due to our sandstone country.⁴

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OUR POPULATION

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The largest, youngest, and fastest growing populations of Aboriginal people in the country. The ABS population growth figures for the Central Coast since 2006 are as shown:

2006:	6,455 (2.1% of population)		
2011:	9,021 (2.8%)	+2,566	40% growth
2016:	12,485 (3.8%)	+3,464	38% growth

At the 2016 Census, the Central Coast region boasts an Aboriginal population of 12,485 people (3rd in size only to Western Sydney and Illawarra Wingecarribee), or 3.8% of the region's total population (327,736). Conveying a growth of 3,470 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living on Darkinjung Land from 2011 to 2016 (per ABS census data). Moreover, this 38% increase, coupled with increased housing prices in metro areas provides evidence that more people are moving to the Coast and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population on the Central Coast will continue to grow, at rates higher than the national average. Furthermore, one of the defining features of the Aboriginal population on the Central Coast is the low median age, with 56% of the population surveyed in the last census under the age of 24.

³ <https://www.darkinjung.com.au/culture-and-heritage/>

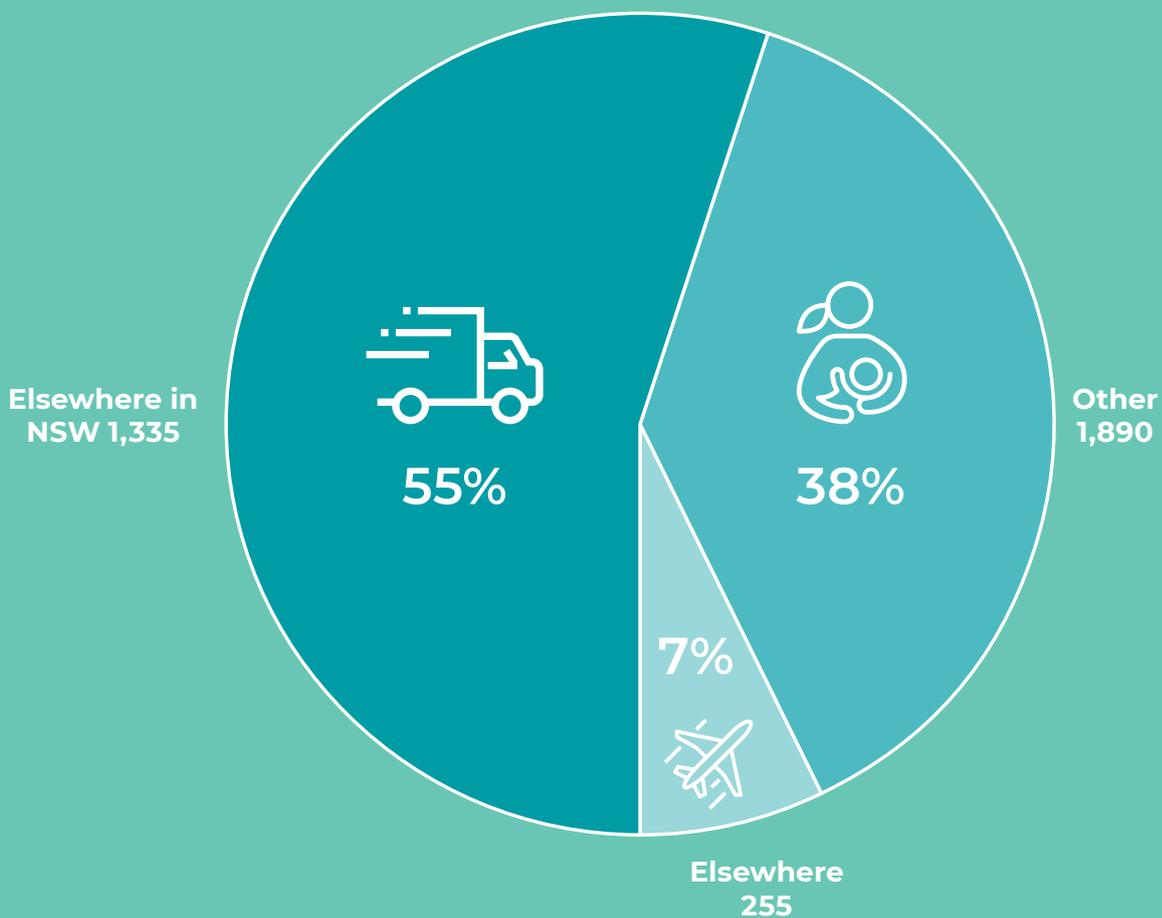
⁴ <https://www.darkinjung.com.au/culture-and-heritage/>



Characteristics of Population Growth 2011 - 2016

Growth of Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander Population

Barang Regional Alliance 2011 – 2016
3,470 people (38%)



1,335 residence in 2016 reported living elsewhere in NSW in 2011, the largest proportion came from Blacktown (11%).



OUR HISTORY



Darkinjung Country and The Central Coast boasts 11,000 years of rich Aboriginal heritage with evidence of rock engravings, sandstone shelters, axe grinding grooves and shell middens. However, despite being a region of considerable cultural significance, our community has a long history of being neglected, overlooked and under-represented by government, due to our location. Governing bodies have historically placed the Central Coast into either the Greater-Hunter, or conversely, the Greater-Sydney boundaries and this has been, and continues to be, at the detriment of our community. Only due to our history of strong activism has the Central Coast been able to achieve opportunities of self-determination.



BARANG'S HISTORY

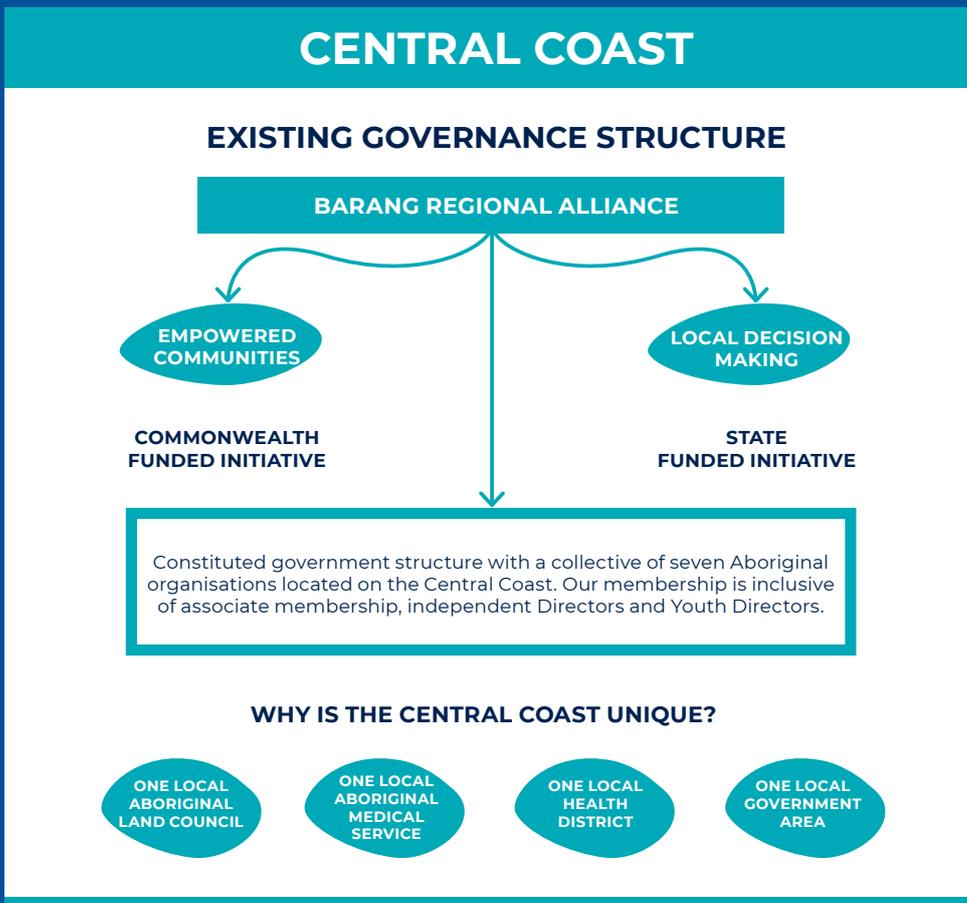


Coming together in 2013 Barang Regional Alliance formed a centralised voice for the Aboriginal organisations who provide service to our community. The alliance enabled the Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations on the Central Coast to work in partnership and collaboration with little to no duplication of service:

- **Bara Barang:** Cultural employment, training and career pathway programs
- **Bungree Aboriginal Association:** Aboriginal Housing, Education Gaps and Intensive Family Based Support
- **Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council:** Cultural heritage and protection, land management and preservation
- **Gudjagang Ngara Li-dhi Aboriginal Corporation:** Early Intervention and cultural connections
- **Mingaletta Aboriginal Corporation:** Community space, Groupwork, family and cultural support.
- **NAISDA Dance College** – National Aboriginal dance college
- **Ngaimpe Aboriginal Corporation (The Glen)** – Men's residential alcohol and drugs rehab
- **Yerin Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Health Centre** – Holistic culturally based healthcare

BARANG'S HISTORY (CONTINUED)

Barang Regional Alliance has the capacity and capability, as well as the endorsement of our community, to transition to the new arrangements expediently.

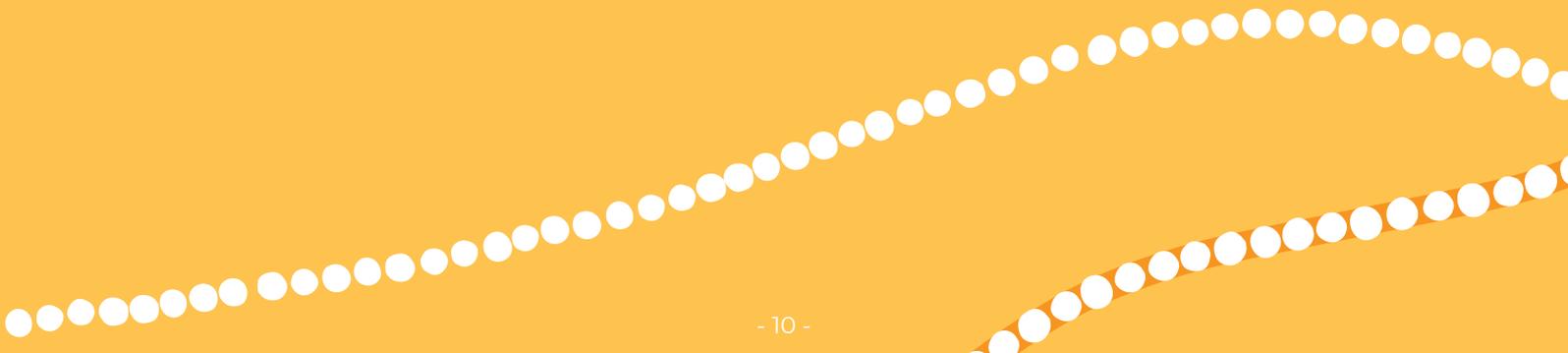




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BARANG'S GOVERNMENT JOURNEY

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- In May 2016, Barang Regional Alliance was recognised and funded by the Commonwealth Government to be included as 1 of 10 Empowered Communities (EC) Regions. This was shortly followed by New South Wales Government recognising and funding Barang to be included as 1 of 10 Local Decision Making (LDM) Regions - making the Central Coast the sole region in Australia working in partnership with State and Federal Governments.
 - Beginning in 2017, and continuing to date, Barang has conducted extensive and ongoing, community consultation, surveys, and workshops to identify our regional priorities. 'Empowered Youth' is seen as our initial priority for our regional development agenda.
 - April 2018 saw Barang formally lodge a 'Statement of Claim' which both Commonwealth and NSW Governments began the process of negotiation on agreements to identify gaps and better meet the needs and services delivered to the local Aboriginal community including an increase in productivity.
 - December 2018 saw Barang co-ordinate decision-making representation from the three tiers of Government to come together on Darkinjung country to participate in a Cultural Immersion. This process signified our commitment to the process of negotiation – to work with Government and assist them to develop a deeper understanding of the unique needs and regional requirements of our Aboriginal community here on the Central Coast.
 - November 2018, Barang played a lead role in the development of the First Tripartite Partnership Table proposing the development of Aboriginal Community Hubs across the Central Coast region.
 - Between 2018 and 2021 Barang Regional Alliance further facilitated the fostering of a deeper relationship with government through the establishment of community panels and the roll out of Joint Decision Making, Involvement in the establishment and ongoing participation in the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances, the co-ordination of the Healing Forum.
 - In June 2018 Barang made its first submission to the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition outlining our communities' position in relation to this.
 - February 2019 saw Barang host the first 'Empower Youth' Summit – enabling approx. 150 local Aboriginal young people to have their voices, views and opinions amplified and included in relation to regional decision making.
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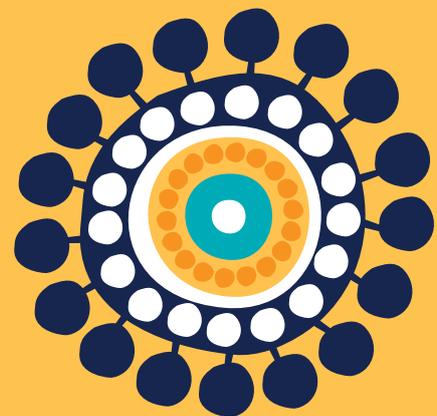
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BARANG'S GOVERNMENT JOURNEY (CONTINUED)

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- March 2020 saw Barang host the second “Empower Youth” Summit – enabling approx. 120 local Aboriginal Young People to have their voices, views and opinions again amplified and included in relation to regional decision making.
- April 2020 saw the development of Barang's Regional Youth Strategy – enabling the voices of our youth directly to Government through the process of negotiation.
- August 2020 saw the formal establishment of ‘Ngiyang Wayama’ – the first Aboriginal led and community controlled Aboriginal Regional Data Network in the country, involving collaboration and support with state, federal and regional agencies (both Government and Non-Government), academic institutions, think tanks in addition to ACCO's, local services and grass roots community members.
- December 2020 Barang made a submission to the Joint Select Committee on Indigenous Economic participation.
- Despite these, and many other significant gains our community here on the Central Coast was again ignored as a potential region for the initial Community Voice Consultations. It was not until Barang Regional Alliance led the multitude of local voices in demanding a consultation for our community. This consultation, eventually held in March 2021, resulted in the highest attendance of community members, to date, of all consultations, across the country.

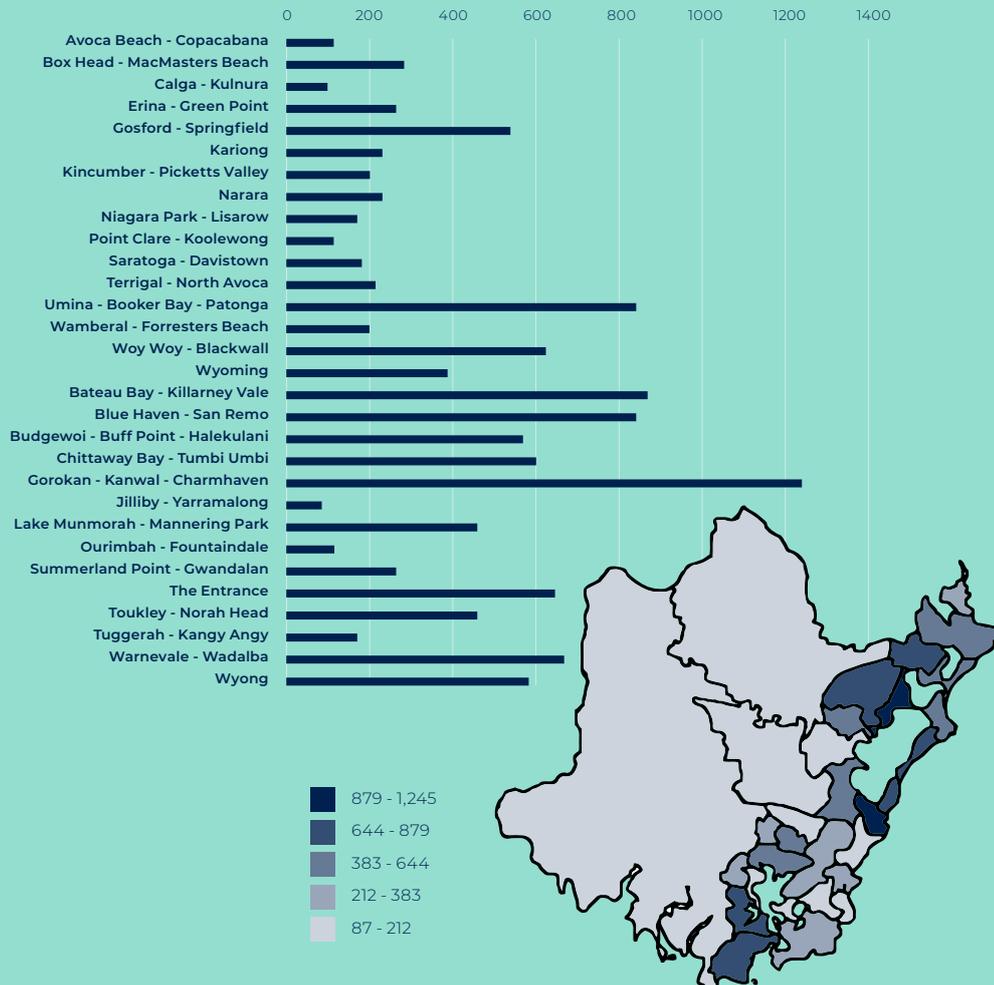
Barang Regional Alliance has both the capacity and relationships to enable ongoing work in conjunction with our local community, the New South Wales Government, and the Commonwealth Government, providing further reasoning for the transition of Barang into the proposed Regional Voice Framework.



OUR COMMUNITIES STRENGTHS

As previously highlighted, the Central Coast has a robust and connected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, that is both large and dynamic. In addition, we have an expected Aboriginal population growth that far exceeds the majority of other established other Aboriginal regions across Australia. A significant point of distinction is our connected Aboriginal service system - We have one Aboriginal Medical Service (Yerin Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Health Services Ltd), one Local Health District (Nunyara Aboriginal Health Unit), one Local Aboriginal Land Council (Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council), one Local Government Area (Central Coast Council) and one Aboriginal Regional Representative Structure in place (Barang Regional Alliance). Barang Regional Alliance has fostered ongoing relationships with Local, State and Federal Members of Parliament. Additionally, Barang Regional Alliance has the majority of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations on the Central Coast as part of its opt in base.

Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander Population by SAS 2016





BARANG REGIONAL ALLIANCE

Barang Regional Alliance is comprised of the following local Aboriginal Organisations:

- Bara Barang Corporation
- Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Gudjagang Ngara Li-dhi Aboriginal Corporation (GNL)
- Mingaletta Aboriginal Corporation
- NAISDA Dance College
- Yerin Eleanor Duncan Aboriginal Health Centre
- Ngaimpe Aboriginal Corporation (The Glen Centre)

In addition to the core organisational membership, we have Associate membership for:

- Central Coast Community Legal Centre

The governance makeup of Barang Regional Alliance also enables representation from independent community members, and youth directors.

Barang Regional Alliance is mandated to deliver Aboriginal community-led decision-making, working in partnership with government to deliver on our Regional Development Agenda, namely:

- Right to cultural learning
- Regional Aboriginal Data Network
- Mental health
- Economic pathways
- Youth leadership & school transitions.

Our community has made it clear that the focus of our engagement with governments should involve:

- Co-design and tailored programs and services to address community priorities.
- Hold service providers accountable and re-direct government funding through Joint Decision-Making processes to ensure programs and initiatives meet Aboriginal community needs.
- Enable regional investments informed by community voice (surveys) and high-quality data, and foster coordination and collaboration in service delivery.

HOW BARANG REGIONAL ALLIANCE DRIVES REFORM AND SUPPORTS OUR COMMUNITY

Barang Regional Alliance is the voice of our community - enabling us to work together in partnership with government and other key stakeholders to reform the ways that Indigenous policies and programs are designed and delivered for our community. We are recognised by our local community as their regional voice, and have had 8 years of successful operation, negotiation and representation.

As a result of this, the community has seen significant success in the following areas:

- Data access
- Mapping services and funding streams
- Engaging with the community to co-ordinate planning
- Developing our regional priorities
- Tripartite joint decision making about policies and funding relevant to the Central Coast region
- Implementing with the support of both NSW and Commonwealth governments.

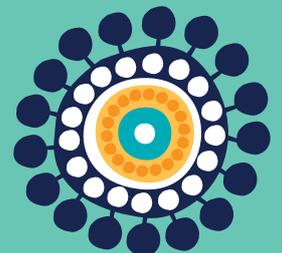
These things offer the type of opportunities for a comprehensive regional approach to closing the gap on Indigenous disparity as envisaged in the EC design model, as well as the OCHRE policy through NSW government – as we understand it, the interim report on the Voice to government suggests that transitions to this structure would further enhance these efforts and therefore reiterate the need for the Central Coast to be involved as a region.

To further support this, the Interim Report suggests that; New South Wales Local Decision Making and Empowered Communities regions are already working in a way similar to that envisaged for Local and Regional Voices and will be well positioned to transition to local and regional voice arrangements (noting they currently do not incorporate all tiers of government).⁵

This is further supported by the interim report's comments regarding places existing mechanisms/governance arrangements. We believe that there would be an opportunity to enhance or expand what is in place – working with our community.⁶

⁵ <https://voice.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-02/indigenous-voice-codesign-process-interim-report-2020.pdf> page 93.

⁶ <https://voice.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-02/indigenous-voice-codesign-process-interim-report-2020.pdf>





THE STRENGTH OF THE EC FRAMEWORK ALONGSIDE THE NSW GOVERNMENTS LDM



The Empowered Communities Design Report (2015) identified a number of systemic policy issues that continue to undermine funding productivity and mitigate against closing the gap on Indigenous disparity. Ultimately, this has ensured that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have not been able to address or participate in closing the gap.

They include:

- Expenditure without outcomes.
- An almost entirely supply driven approach, with decisions made far away from the regions and with little or no demand side input from Indigenous people.
- A large industry with vested interests servicing Indigenous dysfunction and disadvantage.
- Too much red tape and layers of bureaucracy before funding hits the ground.
- An ongoing lack of transparency and cohesion around expenditure in regions and communities that prevents good investment decisions from being made.

It is our view, backed by Empowered Communities, that strong partnerships with government enabling access to the data and information that regions need to build and implement Regional Planning as well as share decision making with government will support to systemic change over time.



REGION LEAD DESIGN



The Interim Report states that it is intended that the Voice arrangements will build on and strengthen existing Indigenous governance. For our region, our biggest learnings have been that strong regional governance is developed from a foundation involving local, place based, established Indigenous organisations, who are engaged in direct services to the community and who are best placed to drive change. Organisations such as those that make up the Opt-In base for Barang Regional Alliance are the key to activating economic and social development, delivering culturally appropriate services, and creating jobs for Indigenous people on the Central Coast. This is well supported by the submissions provided by both Empowered Communities and Jawun, to the Interim Report on the Voice.



5 YEARS OF LEARNING



There are significant opportunities in learning from our ongoing involvement and participation in the reform journey for the Aboriginal community on the Central Coast.

The Central Coast of NSW is the fastest growing Aboriginal region in Australia, with a rapidly increasing youth demographic - hence Barang's focus on young people and economic development.

Empowered Communities is Indigenous designed and led while Local Decision Making was designed by the NSW Government, in collaboration with Indigenous people in regions. There is much common ground, with both models supporting co-ordinated regional negotiations to improve services and investments that target priority needs identified by community, and both are in alignment with regional development plans.

Having both governments 'signed up' as envisioned in the Empowered Communities design framework presents a challenge in 'harmonising' all of the partners, capitalising on what each can contribute and the learnings from that.

The Central Coast has fears that with the introduction of the Voice work, organisations and/or structures, such as Barang Regional Alliance will be directly impacted, removing much needed funding that has allowed us to leverage communities' ideas and priorities in a coordinated manner over the last 5 years.



THE VOICE REGIONS



Under the current proposal in the Interim Voice report, it is suggested that there will be a capping for the number of Local and Regional Voices at around the "upper limit" of 35 regions.

Barang Regional Alliance has played a lead role in the coordination of community consultations. Throughout these consultations, our community has made it abundantly clear that the fiscal position weighs more heavily on the decision for a number of regions instead of ensuring true representation.

We support our Aboriginal Community, and the wider Aboriginal community across Australia, and their position⁷ on pushing for an increase of regions to ensure that communities and regions like the Central Coast have a "Voice" and are adequately represented. Failure to do so will force regions together in situations where there is no natural regional affiliation. This will inevitably lead to conflict and difficulties that will delay progress, preventing the very outcomes and productivity gains envisaged under the Voice.

⁷ Central Coast Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community submission to the Indigenous Voice process



BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES



Having the two key levels of government committed to working with our region adds significant grunt to progressing our local development agenda. Without the involvement and funding provided through the Local Decision Making and Empowered Communities funding, the Central Coast would have been continued on its trajectory of being overlooked and therefore provide no alternative to the experience of significantly high levels of disadvantage.

In our opinion, both governments provide opportunities for a comprehensive regional approach to Closing The Gap on Indigenous disparity envisaged in the Empowered Communities design model, and now under the new proposed structure of a “Voice”.

An example of Barang’s successes is the funding of their first Youth Hub proposal. One of our Opt In organisations, Gudjagang Ngara Li-dhi will implement this proposal with \$0.5m funding from NSW Department of Communities and Justice. Both State and Commonwealth Governments have assisted in the development of the model and the pursuit of funding in collaboration with Barang.



NGIYANG WAYAMA



Ngiyang Wayama is a Darkinyung Aboriginal language word (meaning ‘We All Tell’) which has been generously gifted to the Central Coast Aboriginal Data Network.

The mandate of Ngiyang Wayama is to collectively enable Aboriginal people on the Central Coast to discuss matters relating to data access, build local capacity in relation to data and achieve Aboriginal data sovereignty on the Central Coast. Our regional Aboriginal Data Network has established and are implementing a Central Coast Regional Aboriginal Data Strategy to achieve the network’s target outcomes of:

- Identifying regional data needs – including data collection, access, and management
- Developing data skills capacity within the region
- Establishing a regional data set

The overarching objective of our network is to fulfil our rights to the access and use of data pertaining to Aboriginal people on the Central Coast, supported by the skills, capacity and partnerships required to manage this regional data set.



NGIYANG WAYAMA (CONTINUED)



Barang's has led the way with the development of our regional network through consecutive annual face-to-face surveys with our Aboriginal community members as well as the coordination, implementation and driving of the Data Network.

The annual face to face surveys is used as a means to identify priorities across our region. The results have been entered into Survey Monkey to generate data and to reveal important patterns, such as the clearly different priorities of the younger aged cohorts which has driven the youth focus and priorities on the region.

“At all times, our role is to make sure the community is supported. We focus on providing opportunities for community to connect, so this might be through forums and workshops. We test everything with community, including the data”.

– Manager, Community Engagement and Partnerships

As detailed in the Empowered Communities submission on the Voice - The Central Coast Community has determined a set of success measures that reflect our priorities and are community driven and strengths based. Over time this will build a picture of what is contributing to change, and we can unpick areas that need adapting or reassessing. Organisations across the Central Coast have worked collectively contribute to the measurement of success measures and we now have data sharing.

Through Empowered Communities and Local Decision Making in our region, we have been able to access and govern data at a place-based level like never before. We have launched the Ngiyang Wayama Data Network and we are now embedding community derived indicators into our reporting frameworks.

KEY LEARNINGS FOR BARANG INCLUDE

- A consistent approach is required to regional investment that is actively supported by government at all levels. Having the relevant State Government as well as Commonwealth (NIAA) representatives at the formal (Accord) NSW Local Decision-Making meetings has been extremely useful in ensuring that Commonwealth and State investment is not duplicated and is directed to clear areas of community need.
- Lead times for partnership tables need to acknowledge the time required to ensure that a strong community voice is included in strategy setting.
- Capacity building and learning for community members have been a key feature emerging from the work with both governments. Importantly, the local Indigenous community is gaining an insight into the workings of government at different levels and has the opportunity to influence investment from both governments in the region. Given the very limited Indigenous Advancement Strategy funding on the Central Coast, the community is eager to be able to test funding with DSS or Health to implement their priorities more broadly.
- Trust is an essential ingredient in the partnership, and this takes time to build, both between Indigenous people and government, and between the two levels of government, so that working together becomes the norm.

When it comes to such big systems change, some things just need to be mandated. We needed Partnership Tables to be a formal pathway to bring the Commonwealth and the State together. We are only beginning to get some traction on the idea of a Partnership Table in our region now.

Director - Barang Regional Alliance
Empowered Communities, Barang Regional Alliance,
Central Coast NSW

PRINCIPLES BASED FRAMEWORK: ADAPTING TO NEW MODELS

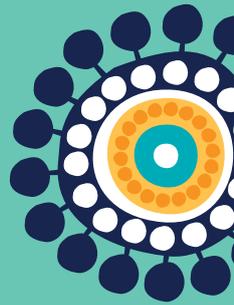
Barang Regional Alliance have a shared set of principles based on the following views:

- 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. We believe that 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 Domains, these are:

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



BARANG REGIONAL ALLIANCE – EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

Further to this Barang Regional Alliance has, for over 5 years, ensured that our interactions with all levels of government consider this principled approach.

These Principles embody the spirit and substance of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous.

Peoples (UNDRIP).⁸ They have been developed through an understanding that a fundamental shift is required in policy approaches towards Aboriginal communities from a narrow service delivery focus to one based on a development approach. It is understood that to be effective, these Principles require a corresponding commitment from government to provide an enabling environment to properly support and resource action under the Principles.

⁸ <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/un-declaration-rights-indigenous-peoples-1>



REPRESENTATIVE STRUCTURES: BUILDING ON EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS



The interim report on the Indigenous Voice to government states that there would be no set structure for a Local and Regional Voice, instead, suggesting that different regions would be in a position to design or set their structures based on their understanding of what best works for their local community.

For our community, here on Darkinjung country, this “structure” is through the representative model of Barang Regional Alliance. Largely, our model incorporates the principles-based framework and, is best placed to transition over to target the needs of the Voice arrangements, once established.

Barang Regional Alliance has been working under a principle-based approach since its inception. Under the new proposed principles-based framework, our previous experience would enable us to adopt and transition to not only meet the needs of the voice, but also, most importantly, remain accountable to our community on the Central Coast.



OUR STRUCTURE AND ABILITY TO TRANSITION



Barang is a not-for-profit public company, limited by guarantee, and registered with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) since 26 August 2015.

We underwent a constitutional review, in 2018, making Barang Regional Alliance more inclusive of independent community and associates, which was at the request of our community.

As a result of that request a number of changes to our constitution were enacted, in March 2019, serving to broaden and strengthening our community representation and accountability at the Board level. These changes included the creation of two independent and Youth Director positions.



OUR STRUCTURE AND ABILITY TO TRANSITION (CONTINUED)

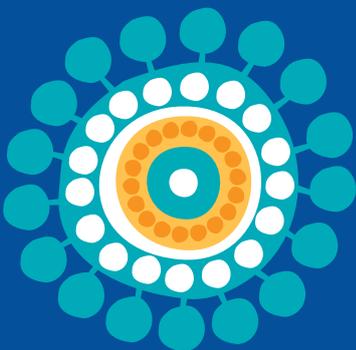
Currently, the Barang board is comprised of Appointed Directors from member organisations, Independent community members Youth, as well as Optional Observers and Associate Members.

Our governance and partnership arrangement are through an opt-in basis, which involves key local organisations and encourages broad participation in the process.

We have structures in place regulating issues including, but not limited to, codes of conduct, confidentiality and non-disclosure.

Barang Regional Alliance was established in 2016 to facilitate and drive reforms. We continue to build our opt-in base and our community membership. Barang member orgs work together to share experiences and knowledge and develop solutions to the problems and challenges we face.

EC created an opportunity for the 12.5k Aboriginal community members on the Central Coast to participate in Commonwealth and State dialogues, which we have generally been excluded from due to being located between Newcastle and Sydney, but not having connection to either. We must make sure in the transition to the Voice model, that these hard-won gains are not lost.



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CONCLUSION

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Barang Regional Alliance Ltd has been the backbone organisation for both Empowered Communities (Commonwealth) and Local Decision Making (NSW) since 2017. To date, we are the only Empowered Communities region to have formal Commonwealth and State Government support, and it is our understanding that both governments should aim to work together with our existing Indigenous leadership on the Central Coast.

Having both governments 'signed up', as envisioned in the Empowered Communities design framework, presents significant opportunities for Barang. The challenge is in 'harmonising' all of the partners, capitalising on what each can contribute and the learnings from that.

In this partnership, trust is THE essential ingredient. This requires time; to build relationships, both between Indigenous people and government, and between the two levels of government with the overarching goal of collaborative working relationships that are both fruitful and harmonious.

Barang Regional Alliance would welcome the opportunity to meet with representatives of the committee and we are happy to discuss this submission further should this be required.

