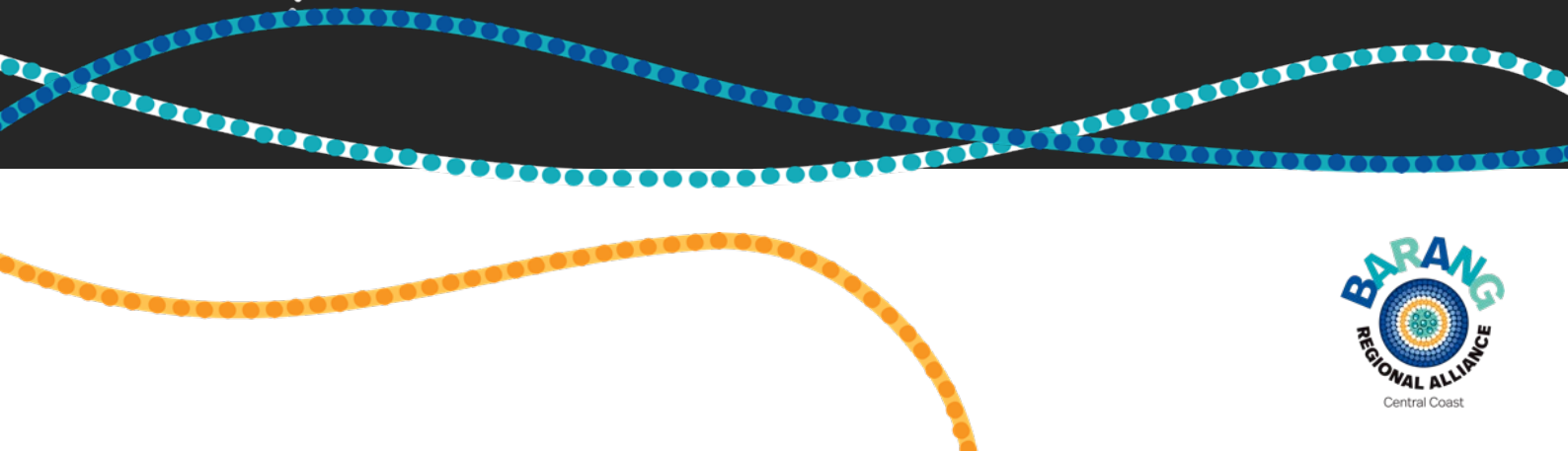


# *Ngiyang Wayama Data Learning Perspective*





# Ngiyang Wayama Regional Data Network

*Building data skills through upskilling, from a learning perspective.*

*Glenda Simpson*

Historically, Indigenous communities were not given responsibility for and not consulted on managing Indigenous programs. A range of external factors have continually impacted the cultural and social well-being of Indigenous People and often do not address the priorities that are important to each individual community's needs.

Believing that a data network is best placed to respond to and progress data sovereignty for our community, Barang Regional Alliance employee Corinne Hodson established a data network for the Central Coast called Ngiyang Wayama (meaning 'we all come together and talk'). The purpose of this network is to promote data use and upskill community members through introducing training to increase their confidence and knowledge in accessing data.

Stakeholders of this network include Barang Staff, Central Coast ACCO's (Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations), Government agencies, NGO's (Non-Government Organisations) that operate in the Aboriginal space, and members of the local Aboriginal community.

Supporting partners are Universities such as the Melbourne University, the University of Newcastle, the University of Tasmania and the University of Technology Sydney, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Jawun ('friend' in Kuku Yalanji language, an NGO that partners with Indigenous communities in place-based capacity building, to empower Indigenous-led change and foster meaningful connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians), the Indigenous Data Network, SEER Data Analytics, (Seer is a tech start-up that works with communities and policy makers to help people use data and machine learning for social good), Goanna Education (is an Aboriginal owned and created educational training organisation which is about pushing the boundaries of tech education to find innovative and no bullsh!t solutions to the issues of the digital divide), and people with specialised skills who work with our network to increase capacity and capability.

Most important, the expected impact of upskilling is that community will have the knowledge and the desired learning outcomes to source the data needed to communicate insights drawn from data.



The ability of the Central Coast Aboriginal community to inform and influence policy, program decisions, and outcomes is heavily reliant on access to appropriate data, giving them the knowledge and increased cultural authority that would address long standing issues for the Aboriginal population on the Central Coast.

It was decided the three areas of training to upskill the Central Coast Aboriginal Community are **Demystifying Data, Data Discovery and Data Visualisation**.

The learning environment is primarily face-to-face but has some sessions held virtually (zoom) due to the diverse network of participants and the community's response to COVID-19. The innovative pilot project sees 6 x 1.5-hour training sessions delivered to local community members, with a focus on increasing data knowledge and skills. The project has been developed by working groups within the network – all of whom participate in a voluntary capacity.

Data fluency training is not an easy task and has its challenges; knowing what level to start at in terms of skills, adapting to reach into the learning outcomes for those who are less confident, promoting why data is important, getting buy in from the community and currently working throughout lockdowns due to a pandemic and the challenge of attribution.

Success of the network firstly being grass roots community led and owned, through learning, that the dialogue around data will move us towards data sovereignty with increased knowledge, skills and understanding of data. Training can be rolled out on a continual basis, thus raising momentum to take up the learning and opportunities for further education for example through Goanna Education a course in Data Analytics.

Key learnings gained through trialing the delivery of training with the network has helped to identify what might or might not work when training the wider community to learn how to find, use and capture data and learn about the various purposes we can use data for.

Various reasons expressed about personal upskilling are;

- Acquiring the skills to support writing up evaluations and to further support research studies
- More meaningful local data for the Central Coast for youth and family service provision would assist to improve strategic planning for services in our region
- Be better positioned to leverage technology to create improvements in organisational systems and processes (e.g., drive program/service efficiencies and maximise staff output)
- Have a sophisticated understanding of the nature, scale and impact of data on our lives at a personal, organisational and community level. With data fast becoming the commodity with the greatest impact on our lives (perhaps only surpassed by water), it's critical that we seek to understand as much as possible about it
- Develop the necessary vocabulary to participate in important policy and legislative reform discussions regarding this topic

Indigenous data shared would collectively benefit Indigenous people. It would acknowledge Indigenous authority to empower Indigenous people who need to be the decision-makers around how that data is used.

The Central Coast's Ngiyang Wayama Data Network with its upskilling around data is an opportunity for sustainable development and participation in data collection towards data sovereignty.



