

Case Study

Helping Central Coast Organisations Work Together



Background

Jawun began working with the NSW Central Coast in February 2012, partnering with seven Indigenous organisations delivering services to over 9,000 people.

These organisations were keen to work together to deliver holistic services but faced resourcing challenges, often operating independently and focussed on immediate needs, rather than being strategic. Sean Gordon, CEO of the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, felt Jawun secondees could help bring these organisations together to more effectively deliver services, drive accountability and strive for long-term change to better the lives of Indigenous people.

In August 2013, an innovative new way of Indigenous communities working with government was announced at the Garma Festival. The Empowered Communities initiative involves eight Indigenous regions across Australia coming together to empower Indigenous people. An early phase of Empowered Communities involved local engagement and the development of case studies to document and share examples of good practice.

Reflective of the substantive effort and resourcing required to support Empowered Communities, a total of 16 secondees, including two three-month placements, were sourced from Westpac, Commonwealth Bank (CBA), Insurance Australia Group (IAG), the Australian Public Service and KPMG. These secondees had varied backgrounds, including senior executives, IT, marketing and communication professionals, call centre managers and a foreign affairs strategist. Secondees worked on a range of projects to support the Central Coast regional organisations to collaborate for a better *barang* or 'tomorrow'. The group named themselves Barang, reflecting this focus on the future.

Approach

In October 2013, two senior managers from CBA and IAG supported Sean to promote Empowered Communities to the wider community, through the preparation of the group presentations and briefings to individual organisations. This engagement role continued in February 2014, when an insurance risk research manager from CBA was seconded to compile case studies of Darkinjung's work. This involved speaking with each organisation to identify their best programs and documenting the development, lessons learnt and outcomes.

The secondee also began extensive service mapping research, which revealed over 200 organisations provide services to Indigenous people in the Central Coast, highlighting the need for the seven organisations to work collectively and speak with a united voice in order to effectively influence stakeholders.

Understanding the volume of organisations provided an imperative to develop a strategic plan with agreed regional priorities. The leaders decided that secondee resources should focus on the Empowered Communities initiative and formally establish Barang as an alliance. Following the quality of the case studies developed for Darkinjung, one KPMG secondee with an audit and advisory background and one Westpac secondee with legal skills began work on case studies for the other six organisations.

At the same time, the head of technology solutions at Westpac and a risk and compliance manager from CBA Singapore, continued the service mapping project using Google Maps to plot the physical location of each provider. They also began scoping the strategic plan for Barang, identifying the opportunity of shared services between the seven organisations and developing a group-wide presentation with recommendations. During this time, the team of secondees nominated one person as the point of contact for leadership to develop their own plans for change and increase responsibility in partnerships with government.

In July 2014, a strategic issues manager from the Department of Defence continued the preparation of case studies, and used this information to inform a number of funding submissions to the Australian Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy. Following this, two CBA secondees, an executive coach and a team leader, worked with seven community organisations to finalise the case studies. A Westpac innovation specialist and a customer service expert from CBA built upon the scoping of the Barang plan; the team designed and facilitated three separate day-long workshops with the seven organisations to establish what success looks like and how Barang should function. A business plan for Barang was completed as a result of this work.

In September 2014, the seven organisations formally approved the agreements established at the three workshops. A team of Central Coast secondees then focused on next steps to ensure momentum continued.

The editor of the Defence magazine trained Barang members in communication and media relations, and led creation of the Barang Bulletin newsletter. A Department of Foreign Affairs secondee researched innovative funding models to move the community towards self-sufficiency, an element of success identified by Barang members in the facilitated workshops. A Westpac secondee with a science background worked across the seven organisations to establish evaluation priorities from the organisational level to the national Empowered Communities level. An executive manager of business development from CBA worked with another innovation executive from Westpac, mapping relationships between the seven organisations, finalising case studies for all seven organisations, and collating the evaluation, communication and alternative revenue research from the other three in the team.

Outcomes

On 8th September 2014, the Central Coast Regional Partnership Agreement was signed by the seven Barang organisations. The agreement outlines a way of working together underpinned by similar social norms as Empowered Communities. At the time of writing, the Central Coast was the only Indigenous community in Australia to have one structure for decision making with both state and federal governments. This means a united voice that not only provides legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to deliver these services, but also capitalises on partnerships to deliver more focused, efficient and appropriate services.

In attendance at the signing was Lucy Wicks Federal Member for Robertson, Karen McNamara Federal Member for Dobell, and a NSW government representative from the office of The Honourable Victor Dominello MP, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Minister Dominello travelled to the Central Coast a few weeks later to specifically meet with the Barang group.

Barang has developed a comprehensive business plan outlining the group's success factors and the initiatives required to reach their goals. Each Barang member highlighted how they would work together and support each other in their applications for funding.

Barang also used secondee expertise to develop the Barang Bulletin, a monthly newsletter showcasing relevant stories from the community and organisations. This regular communication reinforces collaboration between the seven organisations.

Through the extensive collaboration work, organisations have begun to capitalise on natural alliances. For example, the intensive family-based services now support the drug and alcohol rehabilitation clinic.

Next steps

Secondees resources will now be deployed to identify the implementation requirements to bring the Barang plan to fruition and ultimately success.