



Family and Community Services Insights,
Analysis and Research

Ngaramanala: Aboriginal Knowledge Program

Responding to Indigenous Data Sovereignty
and Indigenous Data Governance



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We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the First Nations Peoples of NSW and pay our respects to Elders past, present, and future.

We acknowledge the ongoing connection Aboriginal people have to this land and recognise Aboriginal people as the original custodians of this land.



Overview



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Ngaramanala – Who are we?



Ngaramanala: Aboriginal Knowledge Program is a shared journey of discovery that began in 2019. It is a collaborative project between Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes (TAO) and FACSIAR and uses the knowledge, expertise and strengths of both units.

- Ngaramanala is supporting and preparing DCJ to enable, embed, and respond to, IDS & IDG, as defined and determined by Aboriginal people and communities across NSW.
- Ngaramanala has an internal Aboriginal-led Data Governance group who advocates for, and advises on, the application of IDS & IDG principles across DCJ programs, policies, strategies, and projects.
- Ngaramanala aims to promote an ongoing, informed dialogue between government and Aboriginal communities in NSW to ensure the sustainability and longevity of external community IDS & IDG and DCJ's capacity to enable and respond to these structures.

Ngaramanala – Who are we?



Membership

The Ngaramanala Steering Committee has a membership base of 19 staff, 14 of whom are Aboriginal.

- Aboriginal members are staff from various policy/program areas across TAO, FACSIAR, People, and Cross Cluster Operations (CCOBS) offering a range of subject matter expertise, as well as their lived experience, cultural knowledge and community insights.
- Non-Aboriginal members are staff from FACSIAR and CCOBS, who offer value through their research and analytical expertise and allyship.

Accountability

- Ngaramanala's Chair is the Executive Director of FACSIAR, Jessica Stewart.
- Ngaramanala is championed by, and accountable to, our Executive Sponsor, Deputy Secretary, TAO, Brendan Thomas.

Ngaramanala – How did we form?



In March 2019, staff from TAO went to an Australian and New Zealand School of Government (ANZOG) presentation about the politics of data and IDS. Simultaneously, staff from FACSIAR were investigating a project to develop a culturally safe research and ethics framework designed for research involving Aboriginal children and families.

In April 2019, TAO and FACSIAR established a working group that investigated the concept of IDS. We wanted to work in a new way that demonstrated courage, collaboration and respect; we called ourselves the 'Aboriginal Knowledge Program'. Our first step was to listen and learn from IDS experts.



Ngaramanala – How did we form?



In June 2019, the Aboriginal Knowledge Program held a workshop where Associate Professor Ray Lovett and Professor Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews presented on IDS & IDG. Using the knowledge learnt from the workshop, the Aboriginal Knowledge Program identified five projects to undertake as the first phase of program.

In October 2019, members from the steering committee met with Professor Jaky Troy, an Aboriginal Linguist, who assisted in giving the program the name: Ngaramanala, which means in Gadigal language, 'let's see, hear, think, and gather Indigenous Knowledge'.



Ngaramanala – What are our aims?



- Understand the concepts of IDS and IDG
- Recognise the historical and sometimes current misuse of data about Aboriginal peoples and understand the historical, political, social and cultural context of data
- Identify ways that the principles of IDS & IDG can have impact upon existing DCJ policies and programs to best enable IDS & IDG into the future
- Collaborate across DCJ to improve how evidence and data that is about and impacts upon Aboriginal Peoples is collected, used and governed in the DCJ
- Develop frameworks, tools, and research to help DCJ see the strengths, challenges, and resilience of Aboriginal peoples

What is Indigenous Data Sovereignty & Indigenous Data Governance?



Ngaramanala subscribe to the definitions and principles of IDS & IDG developed by the [Maiam nayri Wingara Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty Collective](#), which were adopted by the group in 2019.

Indigenous data is information or knowledge, in any format or medium, which is about and may affect Indigenous peoples both collectively and individually.

Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) is the right of Indigenous people to exercise ownership over Indigenous data. Ownership of data can be expressed through the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination and reuse of Indigenous data.

Indigenous Data Governance (IDG) is the right of Indigenous peoples to autonomously decide what, how and why Indigenous Data are collected, accessed and used. It ensures that data on or about Indigenous peoples reflects their priorities, values, cultures, worldviews and diversity.

Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles

[Maiam nayri Wingara Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty Collective \(2018\)](#)

Australian Indigenous peoples have the right to:

- Exercise **control** of the data ecosystem including creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination and infrastructure.
- Data that is **contextual** and disaggregated (available and accessible at individual, community and First Nations levels).
- Data that is **relevant** and empowers sustainable self-determination and effective self-governance.
- Data structures that are **accountable** to Indigenous peoples and First Nations.
- Data that is **protective** and respects our individual and collective interests.



Why IDS & IDG are important – Historical context



- A power imbalance between Aboriginal people and Australian governments has existed since invasion.
- Aboriginal data has been governed by non-Aboriginal people and institutions since invasion.
- The people governing the data have power over what data we capture, how that data is interpreted and then, the story that is told.
- Non-Aboriginal people have misused Aboriginal data, misrepresenting and causing harm to Aboriginal people.
- Aboriginal data has been misused to justify policies enacting colonisation and genocide such as 'Terra Nullius' and the Stolen Generations policies.

Why IDS & IDG are important – Rights



Aboriginal people and communities have a right to IDS & IDG as underpinned by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples (UNDRIP), endorsed by the Australian Government in 2009).

- Nationality, self-determination, equality, freedom (Articles 1-6);
- Life, integrity, security (articles 7-10);
- Cultural, spirituality, language (articles 11-13);
- Education, information, labour (articles 14-17);
- Self-development of economic and social conditions (articles 18-23);
- Lands, territories resources (articles 24-31);
- Means, and processes to sustain self-determination (articles 32-36);
- Recognition, Negotiation, and Treaties (Article 37);
- Development of state-sanctioned legal support (article 38);
- Technical and Financial assistance (article 39);
- Both state and international recognition of UNDRIP (articles 40-46);
- Balance between existing law and rights (article 46).



Source: Megan Davis (2016): A common framework for the rights (civil, political, economic, social) of Indigenous peoples – A guide for Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Why IDS & IDG are important – Interpretation



European Astronomers have been studying the night sky for 3500 years.



Why IDS & IDG are important – Interpretation



Aboriginal astronomers had a huge head start. By the time the ancient Greeks were interested in the stars, Aboriginal astronomers had already studied the night sky for tens of thousands of years.



Why IDS & IDG are important – Interpretation



While Greek astronomers were distracted by the bright and shiny stars....

Aboriginal astronomers focused on the dark patches between the glow of the Milky Way.



Why IDS and IDG are important – Interpretation



Looking at the exact same sky, the exact same Milky Way, the exact same galaxy, Aboriginal people and the ancient Greeks observed and reported on different phenomena.

Why IDS & IDG are important – 5D Narrative



Non-Indigenous data governance has led to the 5D deficit narrative which has harmed Aboriginal people for generations.



Why IDS & IDG are important – Wiping out the 5D Narrative



~~Aboriginal children are better off with non-Aboriginal families~~

Aboriginal children need to be raised with cultural permanency. Wellbeing for Aboriginal children is correlated with cultural connection.

~~Educational outcomes for Aboriginal students are significantly lower than for their non-Aboriginal counterparts.~~

Australian past policies of excluding Aboriginal people from education has caused harm, which still impacts Aboriginal students today.

Why IDS & IDG are important – Wiping out the 5D Narrative



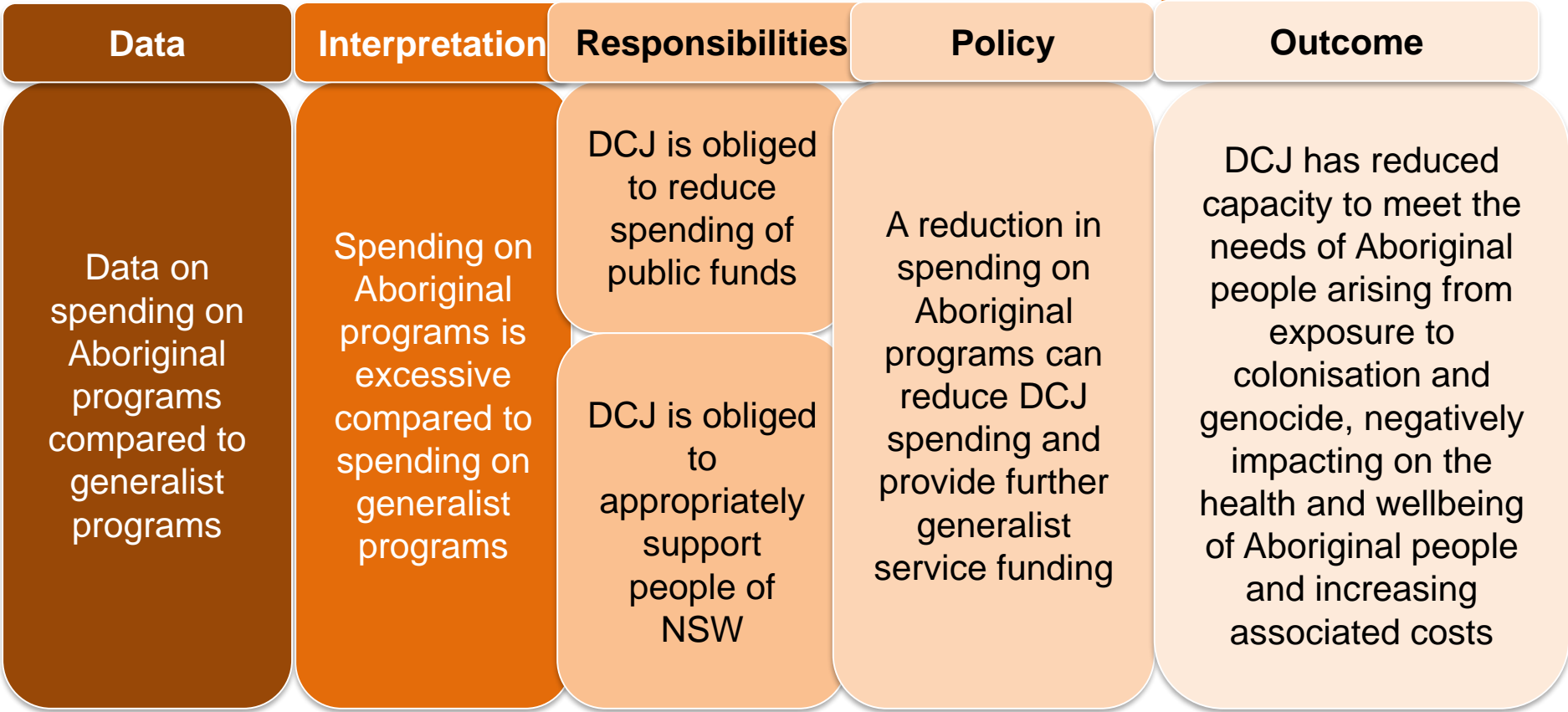
~~Aboriginal people are more likely to offend and end up in prison than non-Aboriginal people~~

The over surveillance of Aboriginal people leads to higher likelihood of involvement in the criminal justice system.

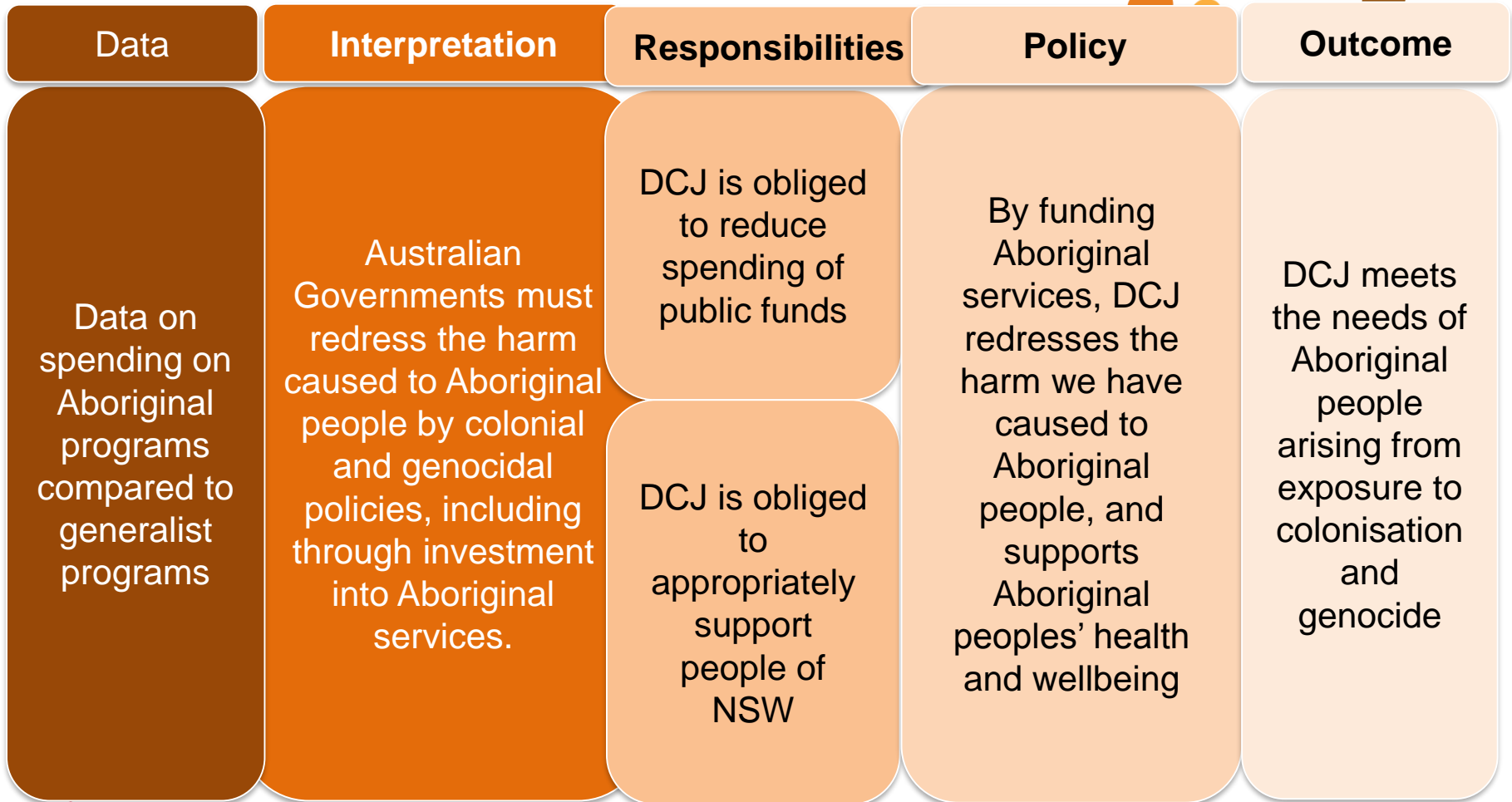
~~Being Aboriginal is a risk factor~~

Protective abilities and strengths are embedded in Aboriginal culture. Belonging to culture creates resilience leading to better social, emotional and physical health outcomes.

Why IDS & IDG are important – Wiping out the 5D narrative



Why IDS & IDG are important – Wiping out the 5D narrative



Foundations for IDS & IDG in DCJ

Ngaramanala has successfully advocated for the inclusion of IDS & IDG in DCJ and NSW Government strategies, policies and initiatives. DCJ has commitments to facilitating IDS & IDG principles under the following:

- DCJ Research Strategy 2020-25
 - Research Priority 4 – Aboriginal-led research: Support Aboriginal-led research and the principles of IDS.
- DCJ Information Management Strategy 2021-24
 - Objective 2: Embed Governance and IDS
- DCJ Information Management Policy 2020
 - This policy is currently being revised in consultation with Ngaramanala to include the roles and responsibilities of new Aboriginal Information Asset Owner and Aboriginal Data Custodian roles that will fall under Deputy Secretary TAO, Brendan Thomas and the relevant Aboriginal Directors across TAO & OSP. This will further embed and strengthen IDG internally through ensuring Aboriginal governance of Aboriginal data.



Foundations for IDS & IDG in DCJ



- NSW Data Strategy 2021
 - Strengthening transparency and trust: “...including engaging with the Aboriginal Community to implement IDS and IDG principles.”
- National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2020
 - Priority Reform 4: Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level
- Family is Culture (FIC) Response
 - Recommendations 1 & 2

NSW Government Data Strategy

April 2021

FAMILY IS CULTURE

REVIEW REPORT | 2019

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF ABORIGINAL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN OOH

PRIORITY REFORM FOUR



Shared Access to Data and
Information at a Regional Level



State and Federal Priorities – Closing the Gap (CTG)



- Australia has identified the Closing the Gap Strategy as its key policy platform to give effect to the UNDRIP.
- Closing the Gap Priority Reform 4 is **Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level.**

Outcome: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to, and the capability to use, locally-relevant data and information to set and monitor the implementation of efforts to close the gap, their priorities and drive their own development.

- Under this priority, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (CAPO) are leading the development of an all-of-government IDS and IDG policy in collaboration with Community and clusters.

State and Federal Priorities – Family is Culture Review (FIC)



- The Family is Culture Review Report (FIC), released in November 2019, is an independent review into Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC). FIC investigated the reasons for the disproportionate and increasing number of Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC in NSW.
- FIC made 125 recommendations about the way the NSW Government delivers services and over 3,000 specific recommendations related to the 1,144 Aboriginal children and young people who entered out-of-home care in the 2015-16 year.

FAMILY IS CULTURE

REVIEW REPORT | 2019

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF ABORIGINAL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN OOHC





Recommendation 1: The Department of Communities and Justice should convene a roundtable with the Aboriginal community and stakeholders to discuss the meaning of data sovereignty and the designing, collecting and interpreting of the department's administrative data relevant to Aboriginal children and young people.

Recommendation 2: After the implementation of Recommendation 1, the Department of Communities and Justice should, in partnership with Aboriginal stakeholders and community, develop a policy which will result in improved partnership being effected in the department's design, collection and interpretation of data relevant to Aboriginal children and families.



Practically applying IDS & IDG principles

IDS Principle	Practical Application in DCJ
Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sourcing Aboriginal governance and oversight of project creation, development, data interpretation, reporting, and dissemination.
Contextual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring resulting data is able to be contextualised and disaggregated to local-levels that are meaningful and relevant to Aboriginal communities.• Publishing resulting data that is accessible to individuals and communities.
Relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centering Aboriginal priorities and community data needs.• Ensuring relevance to Aboriginal families and communities, rather than solely for DCJ purposes and/or interests.
Accountable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consistent, transparent and contextualised reporting and dissemination of data, irrespective of results• Creating an ongoing feedback loop with community to understand what the data mean for them, their data needs
Protective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliminating the 5D deficit narrative and using a strengths-based approach to reporting Aboriginal data, including safe, relevant and appropriate use of comparative and sub-analysis.• Applying Aboriginal interpretation of data to ensure that reporting is respectful of Aboriginal people, communities and interests.• Aboriginal data is reported in context, acknowledging DCJ's historical and ongoing impact, and data quality issues.

The Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS)



Ngaramanala are embedding IDS and IDG principles into new and existing DCJ program, policies, strategies, and projects. The POCLS is an active case study for how the principles can be applied to DCJ research assets.

- POCLS is the first large-scale prospective longitudinal study of children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) in Australia. Information on safety, permanency and wellbeing is collected from various sources. The child developmental domains of interest are physical health, socio-emotional wellbeing and cognitive/learning ability.
- POCLS is the first study to link data on children's child protection backgrounds, OOHC placements, health, education and offending held by multiple government agencies; and match it to first-hand accounts from children, caregivers, caseworkers and teachers. The POCLS database allows researchers to track children's experiences and outcomes from birth.



The Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS)



Practical supports Ngaramanala has delivered to POCLS:

- Guidance on appropriate reporting of comparative analysis and context when reporting results about Aboriginal people
- Review of the POCLS questionnaires and standardised measures of child development with a cultural lens to inform analysis and reporting for Wave 6.
- Advice on the POCLS interactive dashboards in terms of data reported for the Aboriginal cohort and on the guidelines regarding who has access to the dashboards.

Ngaramanala supported the POCLS through the following research activities:

- Consultation with the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) to discuss how the POCLS can update its processes, to understand what is considered current best practice and gather examples of best practice in other research projects.
- Understanding and developing priority OOHc policy questions to inform POCLS analysis projects.
- Facilitating the collaboration of contracted analysts and policy and practice colleagues, including Aboriginal colleagues, during the data analysis planning, analysis phase and interpretation of results.
- Consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders about the most appropriate way to do develop culturally appropriate processes to draw the insights from the completed reports and translate findings into policy and practice.



OOHC Aboriginal Evidence Base



- Ngaramanala are overseeing the creation of an Aboriginal Evidence Base (AEB).
- The AEB forms one of six projects under FACSIAR's Evidence Bank Implementation Program (EBIP).
- This pilot phase of the AEB is focusing on Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) data.
- Applying the principles of IDS and IDG, the AEB will identify gaps in Aboriginal data from all EBIP program areas and formulate the metadata and data fields required to fill those gaps.
 - **Creating** data that is contextual and disaggregated (available and accessible at individual, community and First Nations levels).
 - **Creating** data that is relevant and empowers sustainable self-determination and effective self-governance.
 - **Creating** data structures that are accountable to Indigenous peoples and First Nations.
 - **Reporting** data that is protective and respectful of our individual and collective interests

Why OOHC ?



- The ATSI CPP was developed and enacted as NSW legislation in the 1970's. However, it has had **limited inclusion** in the creation of minimum data sets and has **never been accurately reported** on.
- The Permanency Support Program (PSP) minimum data set defines the collection of data required from NGO's in regards to Aboriginal Children in OOHC. However, the Aboriginal-led data questions are still listed as **aspirational**.
- We know that an Aboriginal Child's wellbeing is not well looked after when the child is placed in OOHC.
 - An Aboriginal Child's connection to their family and their culture is paramount to ensuring that their wellbeing is supported.
 - This project aims to identify the data that needs to be collected to ensure best practice is delivered for Aboriginal children in OOHC and promote the validity, authenticity and transparency of a program's effectiveness for Aboriginal children.

Process



Step 1 – Data Analysis

The EBIP team are identifying existing data and the data required to meet:

- National Reporting Requirements
 - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles (ATSICPP) reporting indicators
 - Closing the Gap (CTG)
 - SNAICC Family Matters Report
- Community data requests (FIC Recommendations, Aboriginal researchers) and Aboriginal-led community data requests (e.g. Maragnuka, Just ReInvest)

Process



Step 2 – Gaps Analysis and Subject Matter Expert Consultation

- EBIP engaged Kowa, an Aboriginal-led consulting firm, to conduct an analysis of 13 OOHC-specific reports accepted by the NSW Government to identify the data DCJ should be collecting to respond to community data needs, align with IDS and IDG principles, and meet NSW Treasury's Outcomes Budgeting requirements.
- Metadata assets will be created to capture the output.
- The AEB team are consulting with Ngaramanala and internal Aboriginal OOHC SMEs to identify, refine and agree on the metadata assets and the data elements that should be considered for collection as part of the PSP minimum data set.

Process



Step 3 – Community Engagement

- An ongoing dialogue will be established with community to reality check and complete the findings prior to recommendations being made to the DCJ Executive for consideration.

What can we share?



Create a culturally safe space

- Creating a culturally safe space for the agencies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff to come together with your data and research staff to create a partnership model to design the agencies model for engaging with IDS and IDG

Centre Aboriginal voices

- Start your process by introducing external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander subject matter experts in IDS and IDG to deliver the knowledges required to start looking at how you as a Government agency should be engaged in IDS and IDG.
- Stay closely engaged with Aboriginal-led Community initiatives to ensure the internal advocacy remains tightly aligned with the Community's agenda.
- Maintain Aboriginal staff and external experts in the integral positions of developing, designing, implementing and evaluating your IDS and IDG program.

Start small

- Create small time-line phases for your project deliverables within your program logic to ensure that the scope of work is achievable and appropriate expertise's may be drawn upon effectively both internally and externally.

Learning from Community



The Maiam nayri Wingara Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty Collective was formed in early 2017 in order to develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data sovereignty principles



We're a team of change makers with a shared vision to amplify the voice of First Nations peoples in impact measurement, evaluation and learning.



The Mayi Kuwayu Study looks at how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing is linked to things like connection to country, cultural practices, spirituality and language use.



Learning from Community



Ngilyang Wayama
Central Coast Aboriginal Data Network

The purpose of Ngilyang Wayama is to bring together Aboriginal people on the Central Coast to discuss matters relating to data access, data capacity building and data sovereignty.



Maranguka is a grassroots tool for all our people to shape and determine our future. It is a vehicle to empowerment, self-determination, co-design and flexible service delivery.



The purpose of Yuwaya Ngarra-li is for the Dharriwaa Elders Group (DEG) and UNSW to work in partnership to improve the wellbeing, social, built and physical environment and life pathways of Aboriginal people in Walgett through collaborating on evidence-based programs, research projects and capacity building, and to evaluate this model of CommUNITY-Led Development as a way of working with other Aboriginal communities.





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