

Together: Sharing, Working & Moving

Better Chances Forum Strengthening Day

Feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers on how the Human Services sector can build strong relationships with Indigenous people, organisations and communities.



Better Chances Forum (BCF) Strengthening Days for Aboriginal family support and early childhood workers have been held in the Northern Rivers in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

The BCF Strengthening Days have been supported by Social Futures, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, YWCA Communities for Children and Northcott, and facilitated by We AI-li.

Over two years, 110 people have participated in five face-to-face events and four online sessions.

An important part of the Strengthening Days project is sharing collective feedback from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers with the wider sector about how non-Indigenous services and workers can work more collaboratively alongside Indigenous people, organisations and communities in the most culturally appropriate and supportive way.

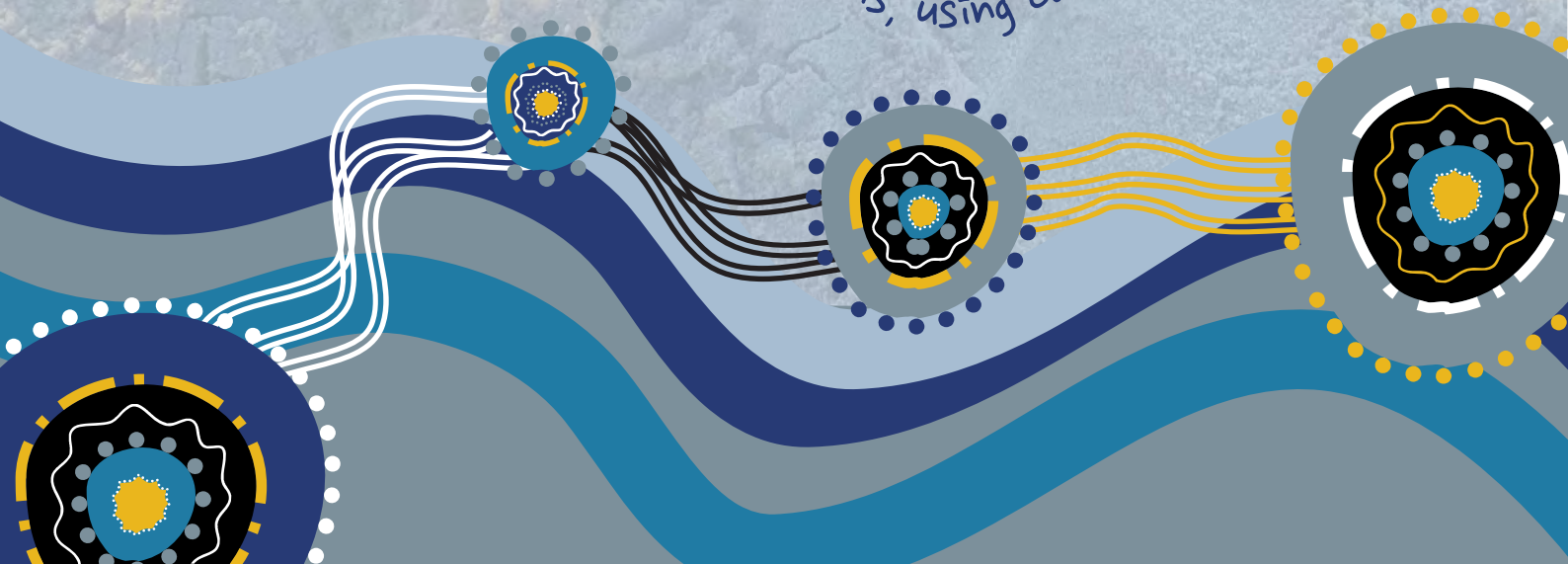
This brief includes feedback from 2019/2020 Strengthening Days and builds on a presentation from participants in the first Strengthening Day to over 130 workers and managers at the Regional Better Chances Forum in Lennox Head in June 2019.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout the Northern Rivers, their continuing connection to land, water, sea and community. We pay respects to Australia's First Peoples, to their unique and diverse cultures and to Elders past, present and future.





‘... We have been protecting Jarjums and keeping them safe for over 60,000 years within kinship systems, using cultural frameworks.’



SHARING WITH YOU

What participants told us

It is important to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have knowledge, tools, internal strength and power. We are patient and listen deeply. We can sit in silence and contemplation with ourselves and with the families and children who need our support. We have been protecting jarjums and keeping them safe for over 60,000 years within kinship systems, using cultural frameworks.

If we are being listened to and heard, our workplaces will respect and support that we – as Aboriginal community members and workers – need to network and share what we do with each other. This supports a more streamlined approach to our work with families that is culturally informed, focussed on healing and supports our own self-care.

We are committed to strengthening a supportive, integrated service approach and nurturing the community of care and practice – working together with community and across services. There has been loss of community trust in organisations. People are feeling disenfranchised. Trust needs to be rebuilt. We need to create safe spaces for the conversations needed to collectively heal.

'... It is important to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have knowledge, tools, internal strength and power.'



WORKING WITH US

considerations for our organisations

Strengthen a supportive, integrated service approach and nurture the community of care and practice

- Resource regular opportunities in work hours for healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers through connection activities like the Strengthening Days – to connect, communicate with each other, debrief, and support each other with openness and respect. Support the stillness we need to be able to keep doing our work with families and community.
- Create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers to come together with the wider sector – to build relationships, collaboration – such as the BCF trauma workshops.
- Create more connection and communication between services who look after kids and carers, and between services and community. Supporting each other to reach out to connect with services – request a meeting, build connection and relationships.

Create safe spaces for conversations and collective healing

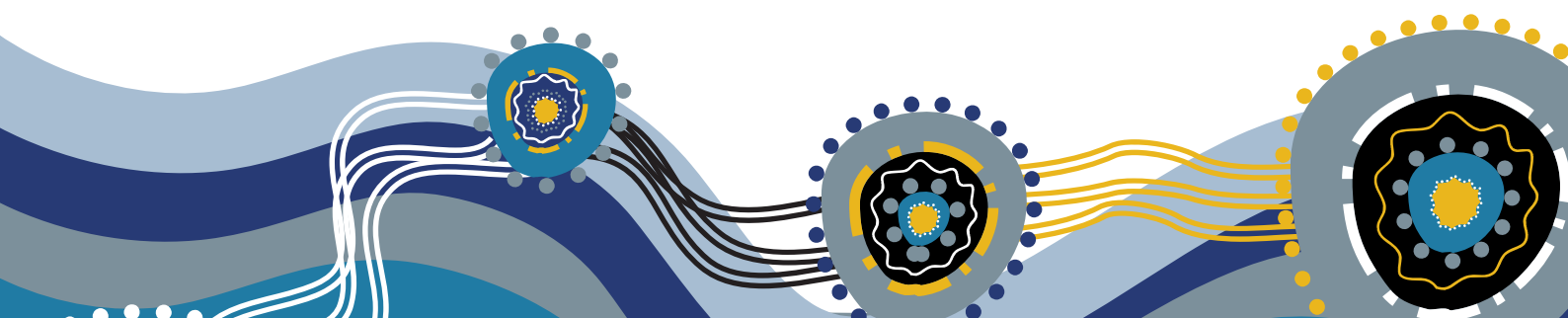
Work alongside community and Indigenous-led organisations to advocate for and support the formation of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Northern Rivers healing collective focused on:

- Finding and connecting the healers within the community.
- Bringing community and Indigenous-led services together.
- Gaining a commitment from community to lead.
- Developing a regional message about trauma and healing and community commitment.
- Creating a plan for local contextual regional trauma mapping and healing.
- Launching regular sustainable healing and yarning circles.

Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to be in leadership and management roles:

- Commit to supporting our Aboriginal managers and leaders more so that they don't burn out and carry the heavy burden of living and working between two worlds.
- We need organisations to support leadership and management opportunities and pathways.

'... We need to create safe spaces for the conversations needed to collectively heal.'



MOVING TOGETHER

What are the next steps?

The Strengthening Day project is continuing in 2021, delivering sessions and building upon the information in this brief.

If you would like to discuss Strengthening Days, next steps for Better Chances Forum or your organisation, or if you need assistance connecting with support, please contact Social Futures betterchances@socialfutures.org.au or 02 6620 1800.

To find out more about Better Chances Forum or to become a member visit: socialfutures.org.au/development/better-chances-forum

If the information in this brief raises issues for you, please reach out for support. Contact a relevant support service (Lifeline 13 11 14) or others in your support network.

Better Chances Forum is convened by Social Futures.

We acknowledge funding from NSW Department of Communities and Justice that supported this activity and contributions from We Al-li (facilitators), workshop participants and working group members.

