“Culture Makes You Stronger”
Aboriginal women’s voices from the South Coast of NSW

Presented by Marlene Longbottom, Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH)
On behalf of Waminda and the research partners:
Professor Bronwyn Fredericks, Professor Juanita Sherwood, Dr Reuben Bolt, Professor Rick Speare, Professor Kim Usher,
Associate Professor Petra Buettner, Professor Komla Tsey, Dr Jenni Judd
Waminda is a partner organisation to the National Indigenous Researchers and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN)

I acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land where this presentation is being made.
I acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land where this project took place.
All pictures in this presentation are utilised with signed, prior informed consent.
Purpose

• Provide preliminary results of the qualitative results wellbeing and wellness component of the Shoalhaven Koori Women’s Study (SKWS).
South Coast Women’s Health and Welfare Service, Waminda

• Established in 1984.
• Responds to the need for culturally safe and secure services for Aboriginal women and their families.
• Rapid expansion in service delivery.
• Over 35 staff, 16 different programs.
Service ready for research

• Planning day 2010 identified the need to evaluate service delivery and conduct research to identify community need.
• No preconceived ideas—worked through to develop a research program.
• Research Coordinator.
• Build capacity from within.
• Write grants.
• Guide and support staff, and mentor.
• Strategic advice.
• Critique documents, policies, and participate in policy forums.
Shoalhaven Koori Women’s Study (SKWS)

- Lead by an Aboriginal woman with Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers as part of the research team.
- Based within an Aboriginal community controlled women’s service.
- Supported by Waminda Board, CEO, staff and community members.
- Service readiness for research is vital.

Map source: Google maps
Capacity building

• Data collection system and analysis.
• Program planning and evaluation.
• Publishing – parallel publishing concept (others do this and so can we, we can make it effective for our needs).
• Presentations and conferences.
• Research protocols for Waminda.

Picture source:
Flickr – Waminda Open Day 27th March 2012
http://www.flickr.com/photos/abcopensouthcoastnsw/6983959685/in/set-72157629588649235/
### SKWS components

<table>
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<th>Studies</th>
<th>Components</th>
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<tr>
<td>Study one:</td>
<td>Needs analysis – community questionnaire; target 300 women*</td>
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<td>Study two</td>
<td>In-depth interviews ; target 15-20 women</td>
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<td>Study three</td>
<td>Client and non-client focus groups</td>
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<td>Study four</td>
<td>Focus groups with service providers regarding Aboriginal women accessing services in the Shoalhaven</td>
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<td>Study five</td>
<td>Waminda service data audit</td>
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<td>Study six</td>
<td>Oral history project; target 15-20 women</td>
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<td>Study seven</td>
<td>1. Waminda service delivery frame work evaluation</td>
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<td>2. Research project evaluation</td>
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* Our initial target was 300 women, due to a delay in receiving ethics and funding we interviewed 30 women.
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<tr>
<th>Research Team</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<td>Waminda Board</td>
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<td>Aboriginal</td>
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<td>Faye Worner</td>
<td>Waminda (CEO)</td>
<td>Non Aboriginal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marlene Longbottom</td>
<td>Formerly at Waminda, now based at the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH).</td>
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Methodology and methods

- Mixed method study.
- Critical Indigenist approach, with theoretical underpinnings of critical and feminist theories\(^1,2\).
- Aboriginal paradigm including yarning and Dadirri\(^3,4\).
Community engagement

Cyclical community engagement using an action research process

Phase one:
Gather information / feedback from community

- Reflect
  - Assess outcomes
- Plan
  - Arrange community forums
- Act
  - Host community forums
  - Seek input from community

Phase two:
Assess, draft & write outcomes

- Reflect
  - Outcomes are representative of community input
- Plan
  - Plan written report / response
- Act
  - Analyse feedback
  - Complete draft including specific recommendations

Phase three:
Feedback to community for modification and endorsement

- Reflect
  - Modify service delivery
- Plan
  - Arrange community forums
- Act
  - Host community forums
  - Seek feedback from community ensure reflective of community need

Sources:
**Strength** of Aboriginal women

- “Strong network, working Indigenous women”.
- “Draw strength from each other to work towards change”.
- “Strong determination, strong will”.
- “Strength to talk about what they’ve been through instead of being scared/shy”.

Insert pic here
Resilience of Aboriginal women

• “Survivors...Make the best of what they’ve got at the time, many are willing to change for the better”.

• “They know what they want and they fight for it, they see the issues, not scared to get help”.

• “Show you it’s not the end of the world. Knowing is growing”.
Perceptions of Wellness

• “State of self – personal state, as healthy physically, emotionally mentally”.

• “Not only being physically healthy but happy, feel good. Not physically, but about myself; where I am and what I’m doing. That I’m coping. Links the physical”.

• “Surrounding oneself in positive environments; family and friends. Educating oneself, growing, learning and not forgetting where I come from”.
Perceptions of Wellbeing

• “Making sure your health is good. If you’re not well you can’t help the community”.

• “Holistic in ones life, broad, emotional, spiritual, holistic view”.

• “Process of getting to wellness, process to become well”.
Summary

• Aboriginal women of the South Coast believe they are ‘strong and resilient’.
• Have a clear understanding of their perception of wellness and wellbeing and the process of being well.
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Waminda publications:


2. Firth, Willow; Crook, Lauren; Thompson, Marlene; Worner, Faye and Board, Waminda. Waminda's Wellbeing program [online]. Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal, Vol. 36, No. 2, June 2012: 20-23.


