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## Introduction

Health from the Grass Roots aims to give voice to local Aboriginal community members (living in Bundjalung and Yaegl country) from Tweed Heads to Grafton, about what they see as priorities for Aboriginal health and wellbeing. Aboriginal staff at the University Centre for Rural Health (UCRH) in the North Coast region are leading this work; gathering community ideas to inform service provision and research.

## Partners

The Health from the Grass Roots team have developed partnerships with a number of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health organisations, Aboriginal community consultative groups, including Aboriginal staff working in service provider roles within the sectors of Aboriginal Health, Education and employment agencies.

Our stakeholders include: Bullinah Aboriginal Health service, Jullums Lismore, Rekindling the Spirit, NSW Regional Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, Ngayundi Aboriginal health council, Nortec, Southern Cross University, North Coast Primary Health network, Northern NSW Local health district, ETC Employment Training Community

## Objectives

To work in collaboration with local Aboriginal community members from the bottom up, using a whole of system approach with a focus on two way learning occurring between community members, service providers and researchers.

Hearing directly from local Bundjalung and Yaegl community members about what they believe are the most important health priorities affecting their families and communities.

We want to develop strong partnerships with our stakeholders to ensure that we map processes, identify and test community driven solutions and develop local research and action plans to address health priorities.

We will continue to have meaningful engagement with both community and stakeholders and continue to focus on community strengths.

## Methods

In late 2018, we employed 4 local community peer workers to survey and facilitate community forums throughout the region. We asked a series of questions to community members about what makes a healthy community.

These questions were:

- What does a healthy community look like to you?
- What things are working well to help keep our community healthy?
- What issue, if improved, would have the biggest impact for your community?
- In your opinion, what are the top 3 priorities for the health and wellbeing of your community?



Map of the local area where the Grassroot project covers. Tweed Heads to Grafton.



Our first feedback to Community session at the Lismore NAIDOC event. Pictured are Grassroots Chief Investigator, Veronica Matthews and Project manager, Frances Belle Parker

## Lessons Learned

### Our findings

We have developed an infographic as a tool to feedback to community, especially designed to tell the story of our local communities' vision of a healthy community. By focusing on the strengths, we were able to highlight the positives happening in our communities.

We acknowledge the importance of identity and belonging through the symbolic imagery of totems and landmarks placed on the poster.

Common strengths identified throughout the region include:

- **Social Connections** through sports and other activities
- Sharing and creating traditional **Arts & Crafts**
- Engaging with sharing knowledge of **Culture & Language**
- Connecting to, caring for and being **On Country**
- Reconnecting through and participating in **Cultural Camps**
- Having access to **Responsive Services**

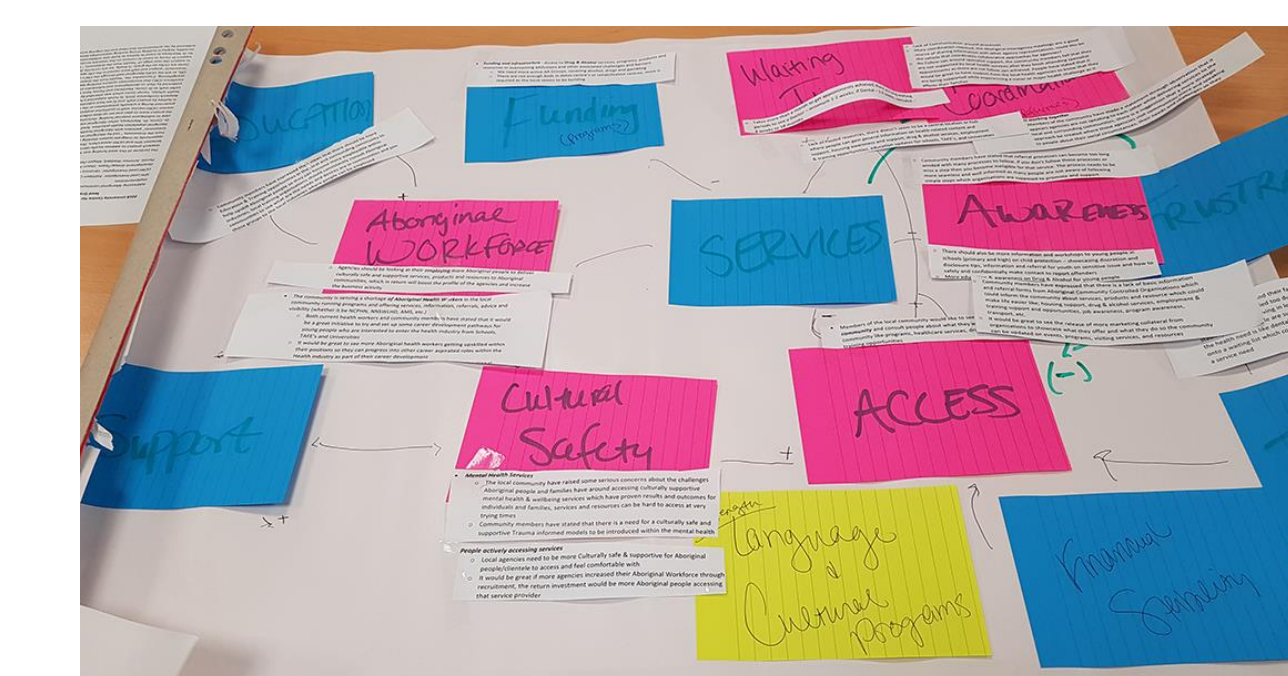
The most important priorities identified across the region for healthy communities were:

- **Cultural safety:** Access to culturally safe services (especially mental health & drug & alcohol)
- **Know our health services:** Increase service collaboration & effective communication with community
- **Strong culture:** Strengthen connection to culture in programs
- **Stop violence:** Address all forms of violence within community
- **Jarjums & young people:** Target children and youth
- **Living well:** Target socioeconomic factors (employment, housing, education)



L to R, Aimmee Waddell, Faith Lewis, Susan Parker Pavlovic, Frances Belle Parker, Tracey Piccoli, Emma Walke, Veronica Matthews and Collin Anderson.

Absent: David Edwards, Tara Bayles and Holly Jenkins, Megan Passey and Katie Conte



Data mapping workshop in February 2019



Tweed Heads Community consultation, November 2018

## Impact/What's next?

- **Consolidate what we've learnt on community health priorities**
- Infographic, bring back to community (workshops)
- **Local health priority action plans**
- Share with stakeholders
- Establish project governance to take plans forward
- Apply for funding to develop and implement projects
- Form 'system action learning teams' (all stakeholders)
- Map out system processes (causal-loop diagrams)
- Identify leverage points, develop and test solutions

## Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge members of the Bundjalung and Yaegl Communities who have completed the survey, attended the community forums and taken the time to share their stories and lived experiences with the research team. We also acknowledge the important roles played by the community peer workers and the support given to the project by Dr Megan Passey.