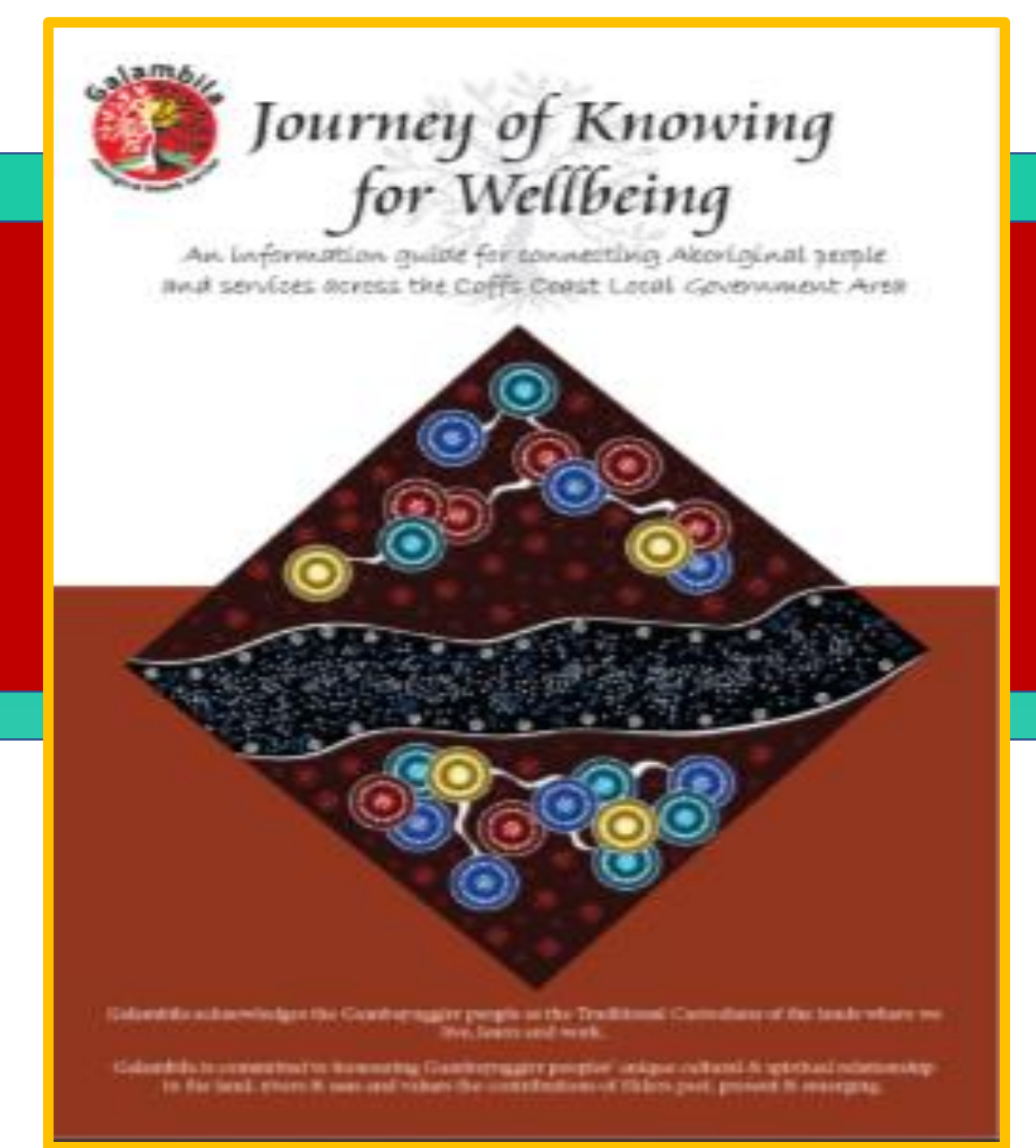




# Journey of Knowing for Wellbeing

**Bronwyn Monaghan**

Galambila Aboriginal Health Service Coffs Harbour  
Aboriginal Social & Emotional Wellbeing Project  
(02) 6652 0800



## Introduction

Organisations and services should be receptive to the changing needs of people, in particular those with varying cultural needs and those with mental health concerns.

***“Diversity responsiveness requires that mental health services take into account the cultural and social diversity of its consumers and meet their needs, and those of their carers and community, throughout all phases of care”***

*The National Standards for Mental Health Services (2010), Standard 4*

Organisations and services should view their own self-assessment for cultural competency as a continuous improvement process which enhances the capacity of the service and service delivery. Many organisations and services will be at different stages of working towards cultural competency. To be effective, cultural competency at the organisation level should be supported by cultural competency of all staff. Organisations and services should promote and support cultural competency and any training that may be required by individual staff members throughout their journey.

For this reason, the mental health project at Galambila, through consultation with the local Gumbaynggirr community, developed an information guide to connect Aboriginal people and services across the Coffs Coast Local Government Area.

## Partners

Galambila Aboriginal Health Services consulted and partnered with:

- o Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation (Coffs Harbour),
- o Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative (Nambucca Heads),
- o Tribal Wave Regional Assembly (MNC),
- o Yarrowarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre (Corindi Beach), and
- o North Coast Primary Health Network (NCPHN) (Coffs Harbour)

in the development of the information guide.

## Objectives

The purpose of the Journey of Knowing for Wellbeing booklet is to guide non-Aboriginal services to information that will assist in increasing cultural capability and competency enabling improved delivery of social and emotional wellbeing programs and service to Aboriginal people living in the Mid North Coast region of New South Wales.

It is not the intention of this booklet to be all encompassing of what the right or wrong approach to delivering services to Aboriginal people is, but rather an entry point to commence a journey to better understand a culture that is thousands of years old and has evolved dramatically over the last two (2) hundred years. It has been this evolution that has significantly impacted, and continues to impact, today on Aboriginal people in contemporary society.

## Methods

Over the years Galambila has developed and implemented culturally relevant models of care for Aboriginal people living within the Mid North Coast of New South Wales. Galambila has undertaken continuous improvement activities to stay current, to learn and apply good practice.

The Journey of Knowing information guide was prepared for print, produced and distributed to a variety of mainstream services within the Coffs Harbour LGA to share some of the cultural knowledge and learnings. The Journey of Knowing information guide aimed to provide techniques to enable other service providers to advance their service delivery to increase access and participation for Aboriginal people. It provided guidance on ways to also create an environment in which Aboriginal people can feel listened to, welcomed and culturally safe.

In addition Galambila blended the Journey of Knowing with on-country cultural tours for mainstream GPs, Allied Health Practitioners and mental health workers and applied to a clinical case study. The cultural tour began in front of Galambila with a smoking ceremony and Welcome to Country before embarking as a group on a coach throughout Gumbaynggirr country. Returning to Wongala Aboriginal Housing estate participants then broke into groups to work through the clinical case study with Galambila GPs, Allied Health practitioners and Aboriginal Health workers. Applying learnings from the morning tour and the Journey of Knowing information guide participants reflected on the case study and their own cultural clinical practice.



***(L) Participants working through clinical case study exploring cultural awareness and capability.***

***(Right) Galambila health workers provide insight into working with mob in a clinical setting following the cultural Gumbaynggirr tour***



***Smoking and Welcome to Country performed in front of Galambila before embarking on the cultural tour.***



## Lessons Learned

Some of the most challenging parts of developing the Journey of Knowing for wellbeing information guide was in structuring the framework from which to commence while keeping the information relevant and concise.

In addition, delivering a pre-determined project directive which called for a “cultural respect framework” whilst honouring and respecting Gumbaynggirr people also required thoughtful consideration. Sitting with members of the community and listening to life stories allowed for the evolution of the framework.

The Journey of Knowing formed one small part of the Scope of Works for the project in addition to many other deliverables. Delays in implementing the project created frustration, uncertainty, and loss of energy, commitment and confidence. As a result there was a certain level of cynicism, misunderstandings, anxiety and loss of trust which affected relationships and the level of support given to the project.

When developing the Journey of Knowing the project was mindful of how it can be challenging to foster understanding and ownership of a concept and to encourage others to focus on the ‘big picture’ of cultural change towards collaboration and cooperation.

Galambila and the funding body, NCPHN were both involved in working through restructures and significant change processes which also brought a range of challenges. This impacted on the planning and development process and took up valuable time translating into meaningful language and purpose. The final product resulted in positive feedback and has been a useful tool to merge cultural awareness, cross cultural practice and cultural capability.

Feedback from a local medical service: *“These booklets are amazing!!!! Love, love, them.”*

Feedback from the Cultural Tour included: *“Thanks so much for coordinating the Cultural Tour – it had a big impact on us all and has certainly inspired lots of thought and discussion around how we approach our programs and services here. I’ve spoken to my Director and we’re very interested in our team being involved in a similar activity – we’re also keen to learn more about Galambila and your services.”*

The objective of the Journey of Knowing was to clarify the importance of cross-cultural service delivery to ensure cultural capability, cultural safety and trauma sensitive approaches are embedded into practice to enable healing and recovery. Requests about the booklet methodology have been received from as far as Tweed Heads in north NSW to medical practices in metropolitan Sydney – for this reason we believe the booklet has been seen as a useful tool to help develop understanding and reduce barriers for Aboriginal clients when accessing new services.

***Community Events were a great way to distribute the Journey of Knowing for Wellbeing information guides***



***Connection, crafting and yarning at a community event in Bowraville***



***BU Festival – Why Fit In When You Can Stand Out? Celebrating the end of youth week Coffs Harbour.***



***(L) NAIDOC celebrations Coffs Harbour 2019***

## Impact/What's Next?

The Journey of Knowing for Well-being Information Guide is a highly sought after publication and was distributed to an estimated 55 local non-Indigenous services. The framework has received interest from other providers seeking to re-produce something similar to improve cultural awareness.

Galambila continues to distribute the booklet at all community events and interagency meetings, with a most recent email request for copies for Juvenile Justice.

## Acknowledgements

The Galambila Aboriginal Mental Health Project wishes to thank the valuable partners who supported this valuable information guide including informal information gathered from community yarn-ups.