

**Subject:** Submissions on Improving Indigenous Education- E-mail 1 of 4  
**Date:** Tuesday, 20 October 2015 5:55:21 PM

Dear Ms Price,

Thank you for your call for submissions on how to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as will be discussed by the House of Representatives Standing Committee.

My name is Stephanie and I am writing to you from MDWg Language and Culture Centre in Kununurra, WA. Over the past 2 and a half years, I have worked with a team of local Miriwoong women to design and deliver a meaningful new, immersion-based cultural-linguistic education program to preschool and early school years students in and around the Kununurra area. Known as the 'Miriwoong Language Nest,' the program works to surround students by the local and critically endangered Miriwoong language through fun and friendly activities such as simple talk, storytelling, songs, games and arts/crafts. The program is regularly delivered to more than 200 children per week, and has bolstered a broad range of benefits including not just Miriwoong language skill development, but also increases in socio-emotional development and self-esteem, improved intercultural awareness, empathy and respect, and wider educational engagement and achievement potential among all children involved. The program has been extremely well received by the children, educators/carers and community on the ground, and has also recently won a national award. Ms Price—we are also thankful for the Certificate of Recognition that you sent to our team last year, when we were selected as a finalist for a WA Regional Achievement and Community Award.

I thought that you may wish to consider models such as MDWg's Miriwoong Language Nest program as part of the inquiry and, should you indeed be interested in doing so, I thought that I would assist you by sending through some relevant attachments about our work and its outcomes.

To start with, attached is a copy of our 2014 (annual) Miriwoong Language Nest Program evaluation. Since the beginning of this 2015 financial year, we have begun engaging in term-by-term program evaluations and not just an annual one, so also attached is a summary of (basic) Term 3 2015 evaluation survey results from both the children participating in our program and the staff at partner organisations.

Furthermore, I have also included in the attachments a (now slightly outdated) 2013 report by Jawun secondee Elise who externally evaluated the Miriwoong Language Nest program to be a "Best Practice" case study when it comes to Indigenous cultural-educational programs in the East Kimberley region.

In case they are of interest or use to you, I will send through several other attachments **in separate e-mails**, including:

- Newspaper articles regarding the Miriwoong Language Nest program
- Web articles regarding the Miriwoong Language Nest program
- Radio interviews regarding the Miriwoong Language Nest program
- Media releases regarding the Miriwoong Language Nest program
- Testimonials regarding the Miriwoong Language Nest program
- 'Other' media regarding the Miriwoong Language Nest program

Wikipedia and wider web searches suggest that the Miriwoong Language Nest program may indeed be the first of its kind in Australia, making it difficult to find local academic writings about the success of the

Language Nest model/approach. However, you may have some luck finding some writings about the success of the model/approach in the international context, such as in New Zealand, Hawaii and British Columbia. Other reports that relevantly point out the importance of, and need for, native language education among children in Australia include:

- The WA Commissioner for Children and Young People’s recent “Listen to Us” report (see <http://www.cyp.wa.gov.au/content/Consultation-with-Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-children.aspx>)
- The House of Representatives “Our Land, Our Languages” report (Chapter 2 in particular—see [http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House\\_of\\_representatives\\_Committees?url=/atsia/languages2/report.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House_of_representatives_Committees?url=/atsia/languages2/report.htm))

Many thanks for taking the time to consider this e-mail and the 3 follow-on e-mails that I am about to send to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions regarding these e-mails, or should you be interested in receiving any further information.

I ask that the content of the attachments that I have sent through to you are not passed on to any other parties outside of the Committee without first seeking permission from us here at MDWg Language and Culture Centre.

Yours sincerely,

-Stephanie Woerde

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