

TESTIMONIALS

Here is a list of just some of the many testimonials that we have received regarding the Miriwoong Language Nest program. These testimonials have been extracted from the 2014 Miriwoong Language Nest Project Evaluation, the 2015 'small progress and success indicators' file and the 2015 Term 3 Evaluation surveys—refer to these original documents or contact Stephanie Woerde (Language Nest Facilitator) should you wish to receive more information about who quoted each of these statements.

- *"[The program] has not only met my expectations but has blown my mind"*
- *"The children are now teaching their parents/grandparents/guardians new Miriwoong words!"*
- *"I have seen a great increase in the children's knowledge in using the Miriwoong language. The way the Language Nest delivers the lessons is outstanding."*
- *"[The program] is extremely important. It teaches children about Miriwoong culture which increases cultural understanding and respect for Indigenous culture."*
- *"[Continuing to learn Miriwoong] is vital for the children as they are the future and will continue to keep the Miriwoong language alive. It also [helps to] build a strong sense of identity which is the first outcome of the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia."*
- *"What you are doing is invaluable for these children, to teach them Language is to connect them to Country, Spirit and Themselves. I believe this is the way to healing for these little ones and it brings such pride and strength to the families."*
- *"This program has been a huge success for our children; it's been fantastic to see our local indigenous and non-indigenous children learn the local language. Without this program for the children the local language would most definitely be lost...Without the local women delivering this program the language would be lost in Kununurra. I thank you ladies for teaching our children, the rooms are buzzing with excitement when the children see you arrive!"*
- *"This program is building cultural understanding and respect for Miriwoong people and language amongst all students. I believe that over time this program will build confidence and self-respect for Indigenous children involved. The Language Workers are fantastic and they bring high quality"*

resources and games to play with the children. I can't commend them enough for the amazing work they are doing to teach children Miriwoong."

- *"[The program is] absolutely fantastic and the kids are so engaged. It's amazing to see some of those kids who struggle to complete work in English feeling so comfortable and confident [learning] in their own language."*
- *"I am in awe of what you and the team have achieved since the Language Nest program started, and while I have kept up with some of your activities and accomplishments via Facebook, I have no doubt that your work and impact on the ground has been more significant and far reaching than is possible to communicate via social media."*
- *"[For Indigenous students,] This is their language and it gives them pride in their culture to be learning it. Also, for the non-Indigenous students in my room, it gives them an understanding of Indigenous culture and language."*
- *"The children always look forward to and enjoy their Language Nest Lessons. The Language Nest Team are always very positive and encouraging of our students. The students love learning Miriwoong through songs and games and the use of pictures is also great, as this targets many different learning styles. Thank you for all of the hard work that you have put in to preparing the lessons for our students. It would be great to see the lessons continue in future years."*
- *"The kids [involved in the program] feel so clever and good about themselves. I believe [the program] helps their English and ability to learn in other areas too. I am amazed at how quickly they learn and retain the Miriwoong language. It is especially lovely to have local Miriwoong Elders in the classrooms and school—the kids' eyes light up when they recognise their relatives."*
- *"I feel this [weekly] language session helps us to build relationships with the Indigenous community. It is a start that we at the school can build on. It gives us reason and an avenue to include more culture and language in everyday school life...I think the school needs more of this."*
- *"[The program] provides the children with the skills needed to appreciate Aboriginal culture and peoples in the town they live in. It provides the children with positive experiences in communicating with indigenous people and hopefully encourages the children to be positive towards people of different cultures."*
- *"There is such strong positivity when the ladies come in and all children are actively encouraged to participate but without pressure or stress."*

- *"I think there is a subtle level of support [for partner staff and not just the children] as teaching and non-teaching staff develop an awareness and appreciation of the culture and language. This provides the staff with a new level of understanding of the contexts some of their students come from and, I think, a greater understanding of how to communicate effectively with other members of the community."*

"All I wish to say is many thanks for providing the Language Nest to all the students in the Early Years area of the school. It has been wonderful to see the interaction between the Language Nest ladies and the children. You have been so positive, friendly and approachable. The children have truly benefited from this program and has opened the children's minds to the language and culture of this area. It has also been a source of pride for the indigenous children in the class as they are able to participate in and share their own knowledge, language and culture with their peers. So once again, thank you."

- *"The children really love the sessions - thank you. They are fast paced (which young children need), active and involved."*
- *"Miriwoong is the highlight of the week!!!!"*
- *"I never thought I'd say this about a language program but you and your team save the lives of children because you make them feel proud of who they are and give them plenty of reasons to feel confident in themselves. This provides a protective factor for the children both now and in adulthood. It may make the difference between a positive life or a premature one, particularly in this region where one culture dominates, children may feel insecure growing up and without much internally or externally to feel positive about. Anyway, that's my assessment of the fantastic work you do."*

Web: hestaawards.com.au



MEDIA RELEASE

26 June 2015

National award for Kununurra's native language program

An immersion-based native language program for young children in Western Australia's remote Kununurra area has won the Organisation Award at the 2015 HESTA Community Sector Awards.

The program — run by the Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring (MDWg) Language and Culture Centre — has been recognised for its role in revitalising the endangered local Miriwoong language, through activities with young children such as storytelling, songs, games, and arts and crafts.

MDWg Chairperson, Rita Boombi, who is also directly involved in the program's delivery, said more than 200 children had taken part in the program through partnerships with local childcare centres, as well as primary and secondary schools.

Ms Boombi said children involved in the program have benefited from a stronger sense of self-esteem and wellbeing, and show a more positive attitude towards learning and attending school.

A recent project evaluation showed that staff of partner organisations strongly believe in the relevance and meaningfulness of the program for the children in their care.

Similarly, all children taking part in the program found it both enjoyable and important to be regularly learning the Miriwoong language, with 90 per cent of children saying their participation made them feel a greater sense of pride.

The program facilitator, Stephanie Woerde, said the initiative had not only made a positive difference in the lives of the children involved in the program, but also to the Miriwoong Elders, and the broader community.

"There is now an increased knowledge of the local Miriwoong language in the community, providing greater assurance that it will continue to be part of community life for generations to come," Ms Woerde said.

HESTA CEO, Debby Blakey, presented Ms Boombi with her award at the third annual HESTA Community Sector Awards Dinner in Sydney on 25 June 2015.

"We're proud to acknowledge the MDWg Language and Culture Centre for teaching young Aboriginal children their native language, to help transform their lives and enrich the whole community," Ms Blakey said.

The MDWg Language and Culture Centre received a \$10,000 development grant, courtesy of proud Awards sponsor, **ME**.

Accepting the award, Ms Boombi said the development grant would allow the program to publish more books for children and for others in the community who would like to learn the language.

The Unsung Hero Award winner, Maureen Crawford of *Interchange* in Victoria and Social Impact Award winner, Karen Barnett, of Victoria's Port Phillip Housing Association, each received a \$5,000 **ME EveryDay** Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant.

Ms Blakey, said the three winners reflect the important work of those working in the community sector in building stronger, more inclusive communities.

"The work of our winners has significantly improved the lives of individuals and communities often over a long period of time and in difficult circumstances. We are proud to acknowledge their achievements and give them the recognition they deserve," she said.

Learn more about the awards at hestaawards.com.au

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*The 2015 HESTA Community Sector Awards is an initiative of HESTA and ACOSS, proudly sponsored by the bank owned by industry super funds, **ME**.*



GOVERNMENT HOUSE
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson AO
Governor of Western Australia

13 August 2015

Ms Rita Boombi
Chairperson
Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre
PO Box 2420
KUNUNURRA WA 6743

Dear Ms Boombi

East Kimberley Regional Visit 2015


Thank you for arranging for me and my party to visit the Language and Culture Centre on Monday 27 July. Please pass on my thanks to Ms Stephanie Woerde, Language Next Facilitator, the Language Engagement Officers, and Language Workers, for their warm welcome, and for taking the time to explain their roles at the Centre.

I was particularly impressed at how your organisation has embraced technology to empower community members to learn Mirima language, including the language app and talking books with pens. I have encouraged various other community members in the East Kimberley, and here in Perth, to download the app and all are very impressed, as I was, with your innovative approach. I am sure that it will very much help to develop and maintain important language skills.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to visit the Centre, and please accept my very best wishes to the staff and all involved.

With thanks and warm regards.

Yours sincerely



GOVERNOR