

*Submission*

TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS:

Inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities

August 2011

from



Contact: Hannah E. Harper  
Resource Worker



A project of the  
Northern Regional Council of the  
Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress,  
and the Uniting Church in Australia, Northern Synod





Wangurri Bible Translation  
Yurranydjil & Golun Dhurrkay  
North East Arnhem Land

Pitjantjatjara Bible Translation  
Scripture workers & supporters  
APY Lands, Central Australia



Kuninjku Bible translation  
West Arnhem Land



The Good Samaritan' Draft  
Worrorra language  
West Kimberley

“Our language is like a pearl inside a shell. The shell is like the people that carry the language. If our language is taken away, then that would be like a pearl that is gone. We would be like an empty oyster shell.”

*Yurranydjil Dhurrkay, Galiwin'ku, North East Arnhem Land*

# Overview

## **About 'Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures'**

'Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures' (CSIS) is a project of the Uniting Church in Australia Northern Synod, and the Indigenous presbytery, the Northern Regional Council (NRCC), of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC). The objective of this project is to provide services and resources to Indigenous Christians who are working to develop church resources in local languages. This activity includes Bible Translation, multimedia and resource production. CSIS promotes new and existing partnerships within Indigenous communities, and with para-church organisations and supporters from around Australia - 'Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures.'

## **Scope**

This submission provides information about CSIS activities in the four regions of the NRCC Presbytery:

- North East Arnhem Land
- West Arnhem Land
- Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands
- West Kimberley

Regional profiles are built around reports and interviews given by Indigenous stake-holders and non-Indigenous support staff. This content is structured around the questionnaire and Terms of Reference provided by the House of Representatives' Standing Committee. In this paper, the word 'project' is also used to refer to work happening internally, ie: with particular clan languages. CSIS is the entity of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) which unites and supports regional Scripture projects in different languages. Some sections of this paper refer to separate, partner organisations, which play a crucial part in providing training and consultancy for Indigenous language workers. Within the individual questionnaire responses, respondents make mention of language and community issues broader than Indigenous Scripture work; the complete questionnaire responses are included in the final section of this paper.

## **Purpose**

The objectives of this submission are:

- to provide a forum for Indigenous stake-holders to share ideas about Aboriginal cultures, languages, and faith;
- to inform the government of the scope of the UCA's ongoing involvement in language work;
- to reinforce the UCA's ongoing commitment to Indigenous languages, literacy and learning;
- to encourage robust language policy in all levels and departments of Government.

# Table of Contents

Indigenous Languages in the four regions of CSIS	3
#1 The benefits of giving attention and recognition to Indigenous languages	6
#2 The contribution of Indigenous languages to closing the gap and strengthening Indigenous identity and culture.	7
Groups and Projects; Activities, Recording and Use	7
North East Arnhem	7
West Arnhem	11
West Kimberley	11
Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, Central Australia	12
Support structures	13
Schools	13
#3 The potential benefits of including Indigenous languages in early education	14
#4 Measures to improve education outcomes in those Indigenous communities where English is a second language.	15
Translation & Interpreting Services	15
Impact	16
#5 The educational and vocational benefits of ensuring English language competency amongst Indigenous communities.	17
#6 Measures to improve Indigenous language interpreting and translating services.	17
Difficulties	19
#7 The effectiveness of current maintenance and revitalisation programs for Indigenous languages.	19
#8 The effectiveness of Commonwealth Government Indigenous languages policy in delivering its objectives and relevant policies of other Australian governments.	20
Aspirations & Conclusion	20
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>22</b>

Interviews	23
Maratja Dhamarrandji	23
Dorothy Bepuka	24
Djawuṭ Goṇdarra	25
Yurranydjil Dhurrkay	26
Mätjarra Garrawurra	27
Ḍuṇḍiwuy Wunungmurra & Marrpaḷawuy Marika	29
Margaret Miller	32
Glossary	34
Appendix	35

## Indigenous Languages in the four regions of CSIS

### North East Arnhem Land

Table one shows responses to question one of the questionnaire, “What are the languages spoken in your community?”

- Yirrkala - D̪uṅḍiwuy Wunungmurra, Marrpalawuy Marika
- Galiwin’ku - Maratja Dhamarrandji, Yurranydjil Dhurrkay, Djawuṭ Goṅḍarra, Bepuka Garawirtja, Margaret Miller
- Ramingining - Mätjarra Garrawurra, Banyawarra Malibirr

This table is not based on extensive language surveys, nor is it an exhaustive list of clan languages or communities in North East Arnhem Land (Milingimbi, Gapuwiyak, and homeland communities are not represented here). These responses reflect the diversity of clan languages within the Yolṅu Matha group, and also indicate regional spread of clan languages and groups.

Table 1: What are the languages spoken in your community?

LANGUAGE GROUP	CLAN LANGUAGE	COMMUNITY		
		YIRRKALA	GALIWIN’KU	RAMINGINING
<b>Dhuwala</b>	Gumatj*	✓	✓	
	Mangalili	✓		
	Maḍarrpa	✓		
	Munyuku	✓		
	Gupapuyṅu*		✓	✓
<b>Dhay’yi</b>	Dhalwaṅu	✓	✓	
	Djarrwark	✓		
<b>Dhuwal</b>	Djambarrpuyṅu*	✓	✓	✓
	Djäpu	✓		
	Ḍaṭiwuy	✓		
	Marrakulu	✓		
	Dhuḍi-Djäpu	✓		
	Ḍiyagalawumirr			✓
	Ḍiyagawumirr		✓	✓
<b>Dhaṅu</b>	Gälpu*	✓	✓	
	Naymil	✓		
	Rirratjṅu	✓		
	Golumala*	✓	✓	

LANGUAGE GROUP	CLAN LANGUAGE	COMMUNITY		
		YIRRKALA	GALIWIN'KU	RAMINGINING
	Wangurri*	✓	✓	
<b>Djaṅu</b>	Warramiri*	✓	✓	
	Malawuṅay	✓		
	Gupapuyṅu-Birrkili		✓	
<b>Djinaṅ</b>	Wolkpuy			✓
	Manharrṅu			✓
	Djadiwitji			✓
	Bälmbi			✓
	Wurrki-ganydjarr			✓
	Däbi			✓
	Mildjiṅi			✓
<b>Djinba</b>	Wuduminy			✓
<b>Djininy</b>	Mandhalpuy			✓
	Ganalbingu			✓
<b>Yakuy</b>	Wägilak			✓
<b>Other</b>	Wuḷaki			✓
	Dhuwaya	✓		
	Ranybarrṅa			✓

\* Indigenous Scripture workers are currently producing material in these clan languages.

In response to question two, “How well are they (languages) spoken by children, adults and elders?”, respondents indicated that clan languages are widely understood by all generations of Yolḷu: children, adults and elders. In Ramingining, children of Djinaṅ families speak Djinaṅ at home, but Dhuwal (eg: Djambarrpuyṅu) in public. In Yirrkala, children and adults are speaking Dhuwaya, before turning to their respective clan languages later in life.

“The children mostly speak the common language, Djambarrpuyṅu. There are some children who speak Gälpu, and there are children at our Wangurri homeland base who are speaking their own language, Wangurri. In Galiwin’ku the adults and the elders speak their own (clan) languages.”

*Yurranydjil Dhurrkay, Galiwin’ku*

In answering this question, some respondents express concern about the health of traditional languages amongst children. Note that English is not the language of choice for these children, rather a more widely spoken variety of Yolḷu Matha.

“Mostly elders are the ones using Djaṅu. This language was stronger in past generations (the parents and grandparents of the elders today). A few adults are still using their language today, but

the children are not learning this language well. Children are not using this language fluently now and only hear a little.”

*Dorothy Bepuka, Galiwin'ku*

“There is an intergenerational language shift that is occurring with younger children from smaller language groups choosing to speak their own variety of Yolŋu Matha at home but then a more prominent variety of Yolŋu Matha publicly.”

*Margaret Miller, Galiwin'ku*

### West Arnhem Land

As in the Indigenous communities of Eastern Arnhem Land, many different languages are spoken in communities around West Arnhem Land. However, languages of western Arnhem Land fall into several unrelated language families. Other languages spoken in the town of Warruwi include: Kunbarlang, Kunwinjku, Kalpu, and Iwaidja. The following table lists CSIS projects current in West Arnhem.

Table 2: CSIS Projects in West Arnhem

LANGUAGE	COMMUNITY
Maung	Warruwi
Kuninjku	Marrkolidjban & surrounds

### West Kimberley

In West Kimberley communities of Western Australia, Kimberley Kriol is widely spoken. Three of the traditional languages spoken in West Kimberley communities are listed below:

Table 3: Languages spoken in two communities of West Kimberley

LANGUAGE	COMMUNITY
Worrorra, Ngarinyin, Wunumbal Kimberley Kriol	Mowanjum
	Derby

Of the languages in this immediate region, Worrorra is most endangered. Several elderly Indigenous Christians are the last remaining competent speakers of Worrorra, and they have been involved in the CSIS Worrorra Scripture and language project in West Kimberley in 2009-2010. Though there is some interest in language work in the adult population, reports from these elders reveal a devastating lack of engagement with traditional language, kin and culture; crime and substance abuse continue to be endemic in these communities.

“They (the young people) hold up the grog and the ganja (marijuana), and tell me ‘this is my culture’.”

*Janet Oobagooma, West Kimberley*

### Aṅangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands

Desert languages of Central Australia are generally spread over vast areas, and the Pitjantjatjara language speakers are no exception. It has been estimated that at least 3000 people speak Pitjantjatjara: children, adults and elders. Yankunytjatjara and Ngaanyatjara are related languages of this same region. Most of the speakers of these languages reside in communities and homelands around north western South Australia:



LANGUAGE	COMMUNITY
Pitjantjatjara* Yankunytjatjara Ngaanatjara	Pukatja
	Amata
	Mimili
	Fregon
	Indulkana

\*Indigenous Scripture workers are currently translating the Bible into Pitjantjatjara.

Indigenous Scripture workers have noted changes in Pitjantjatjara language amongst the youth and children. Though this language change has not been formally surveyed, by all reports children are still speaking Pitjantjatjara 'well'.



### #1 The benefits of giving attention and recognition to Indigenous languages

With attention, and devoted language surveys, there can be a growing knowledge of the diversity of human language expression in Australian Indigenous cultures. With greater knowledge, comes greater understanding of the many different stories of Indigenous groups and lands around Australia.

“So much is written in English, but we have our language orally. It is also important to have our language written. It is good to have the differences of all the dialects (and their clan languages) identified and to know the differences of the vocab and the grammar, for example, in the Djinyiny language there are even differences to be noted between the two dialects of Mandhalpuy and Ganalbinju.”

*Mätjarra Garrawurra, Ramingingin*

Indigenous Christians appreciate the church’s recognition of Indigenous languages to express faith, and to grow in Christian knowledge, through Bible translation.

“If I can hear the Scripture in my language I can feel I am a part of the whole of life, and the Scriptures can be available to my group as well, just like they are for everyone else. I too can be, and am related to my Creator through the Scriptures.”

*Yurranydjil Dhurrkay, Galiwin’ku*

Finally, Indigenous Scripture workers feel the need to have Indigenous languages written for reference - maintained and preserved for future generations:

“Because I want to see my language in writing. All languages have to be written down, in books, because yalala (later), we never know, that language will disappear, or it will be gone, for the Djamarakuḷi (children) of the future, they will look for the language. So that’s a good idea, because we’re doing this translation, they can run and get the language from the book. There’s bayṇu (nothing), no Yolḷu books that are written by Yolḷu. There are resources yes, nowadays, at the school. But with Djorra (books), where you can sit and read, bayṇu (nothing)... it helps our kids learn how to read and write. Not only these two or three languages. There are other languages, for other kids. Because in the school, there is not just one tribe, there are many tribes - all these tribes - in the school. We want the Dhay’yi kids to go and see their own books written in Dhay’yi, or Dhuwaya, or Dhuwal, or Dhanju.”

*Dundiwuy Wunungmurra, Yirrkala*



## #2 The contribution of Indigenous languages to closing the gap and strengthening Indigenous identity and culture.

It is clear from Table one and from Questionnaire responses, that there exist inextricable links between language, clan, and kinship in Indigenous communities.

“There are many languages spoken in my community at Galiwin’ku, Elcho Island. In the East Arnhem Land region, we call ourselves the Yolŋu people. That includes our respective languages in each clan, and tribal groups, of both Dhuwa and Yirritja moieties. We are all related to one another, and so are our Yolŋu languages. Although we still understand each other, we each have different dialects that make us unique and different from each other. The main language spoken at Elcho Island is Djambarrpuyŋu. That is also my language.”

*Maratja Dhamarrandji, Galiwin’ku*

Language is a means of coping and communicating, in a cross-cultural environment that may otherwise be overwhelming and isolating. Noel Pearson eloquently states that Indigenous language forms a necessary bridge between past, present and future.

“We Aboriginal Australians have lost most of our land, our sovereignty and most that once was ours. The necessary solace in this grief is to speak with my children in my ancestral and historical tongues. The necessary solace is to speak my Australian language, to read and sing the old texts from classical times and from the mission days that have been written down, and to build a living literature by writing more. We do need economically and socially sustainable lives; but it is our cultural link with the past - a link that would break without language - that makes our lives spiritually sustainable as members of a conquered people. What we need more than anything else is to see that our tongues are not dying languages spoken only in a few homes but languages with a future: growing, officially recognised languages of Australia.”

*Noel Pearson, The Australian, 21/5/2011<sup>1</sup>*

In conclusion, recognition of Indigenous language is a fundamentally important recognition of Indigenous people of Australia. The benefits of this recognition are both symbolic and practical:

- Indigenous people are affirmed in their identities, histories, and the Christian faith;
- Indigenous people are better equipped to engage with close kin, their wider community, and multilingual Australia.

### Groups and Projects; Activities, Recording and Use

#### North East Arnhem

There is a strong sense of continuity between the current initiative of CSIS, and the long history of Bible Translation projects in North East Arnhem. Some Indigenous people currently embarking on language work in various clan languages, were involved in the Djambarrpuyŋu Bible Translation Project (DBTP) over the last 25 years. The DBTP celebrated a major milestone in 2008 with the publication of the Djambarrpuyŋu New Testament. Other languages in this region have also had church support for Bible Translation, most notably Gumatj, and Gupapuyŋu.

Since 2009, CSIS and the Australian Society for Indigenous Languages (AuSIL) have cooperatively presented several training workshops for Bible translation. These workshops cover content such as translation principles, computer literacy, and Bible translation processes. These workshops have been well-attended by Indigenous Christians from around Arnhem Land. Through these workshops, people have been encouraged and equipped to pursue translation in the following Yolŋu clan languages:

- Gupapuyŋu
- Golumala
- Wangurri
- Warramiri

---

<sup>1</sup> Pearson, Noel. *Speaking one's mother tongue is vital*. The Australian. 21st May, 2011.  
CSIS - Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures

- Dhay'yi
- Dhuwaya

There are between one and five people working on each of these clan languages. Indigenous Scripture workers also appreciate broad support from other members of their respective clans.

"About five are involved, otherwise I am listening and engaging informally with many."

*Mätjarra Garrawurra, Ramingining*

"There are many helpers for Wangurri. It started with my father who was close to me when I was working with the Djambarrpuyŋu project, and then another elder Wangurri lady who just recently passed away also gave me lots of encouragement in the early years to pursue this vision for Wangurri."

*Yurranydjil Dhurrkay, Galiwin'ku*

"We need a lot of support from the whole community: the family, the adults, whoever is a linguist... because it's Djorra, Bible, we're doing it, God's word, not by itself, but it is the Word of God. So we want to show, and let Yolŋu know that this is what we are doing, it's not just for us, it's for everybody, a written language for Dhuwaya and Dhay'yi."

*Dundiwuy Wunungmurra, Yirrkala*

In answer to question four of the questionnaire, there emerged two main motivations for embarking on these language projects:

- language maintenance/preservation, and
- expression of faith / worship.

"So people will know this language (Djanu'mi), that it exists, and will remain and not be lost."

*Dorothy Bepuka, Galiwin'ku*

"Golumala is part of the Dhanu'mi language group. I am working with four clans that are within the Dhanu'mi group, i.e. Golumala, Gälpu, Njaimil and Rirratjinu. My project is Golumala Bible Translation. When I saw that the Timor languages were translating the Bible using the 'Our Word' program, I could see that it was possible for me to also do this work. It motivated me to record my own language. We started this work in 2009 when Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures (CSIS) held a workshop for people interested in 'Our Word'. I am presently typing all the language work on the 'Our Word' program on the computer."

*Djawut Gondarra, Galiwin'ku*

"I come from a group/tribe called "Wangurri". The project I'm doing now is the Wangurri Translation of the Bible as part of Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures (CSIS)."

*Yurranydjil Dhurrkay, Galiwin'ku*

"...just because of hearing other Yolŋu, in Galiwin'ku, Milingimbi, in their languages they can sing praise and worship, hymns. When we heard that they were doing translation in their languages, that's when it made us want to do one here at Yirrkala. Myself, I was thinking of two languages, Dhuwaya, and Djäpu (Dhuwal)."

*Dundiwuy Wunungmurra, Yirrkala*

Indigenous Bible translators are primarily involved in recording languages using the 'Our Word' computer software, developed by The Seed Company especially for national Bible Translators. This program is taught and supported by AuSIL, through the CSIS workshops.

"The Djanu'mi language is being recorded onto the computer using the 'Our Word' program designed for Scripture work. In the family we encourage conversations in the language."

*Dorothy Bepuka, Galiwin'ku*

"I use a computer to type Wangurri words in a program called 'Our Word'. There are also some audio recordings of Bible Scriptures (we have produced) in our own languages to be put on the radio for all people to listen to and then in that way they feel encouraged."

*Yurranydjil Dhurrkay, Galiwin'ku*

“I work with computers to record the languages in my (Scripture) project, but also in my other workplaces. I have been making books for playgroup in Dhuwal language (for a Government Organisation) Through this workplace I receive support and also for my training with Family As First Teachers (FAFTS). I also make posters in the school in language.”

*Mätjarra Garrawurra, Raminging*

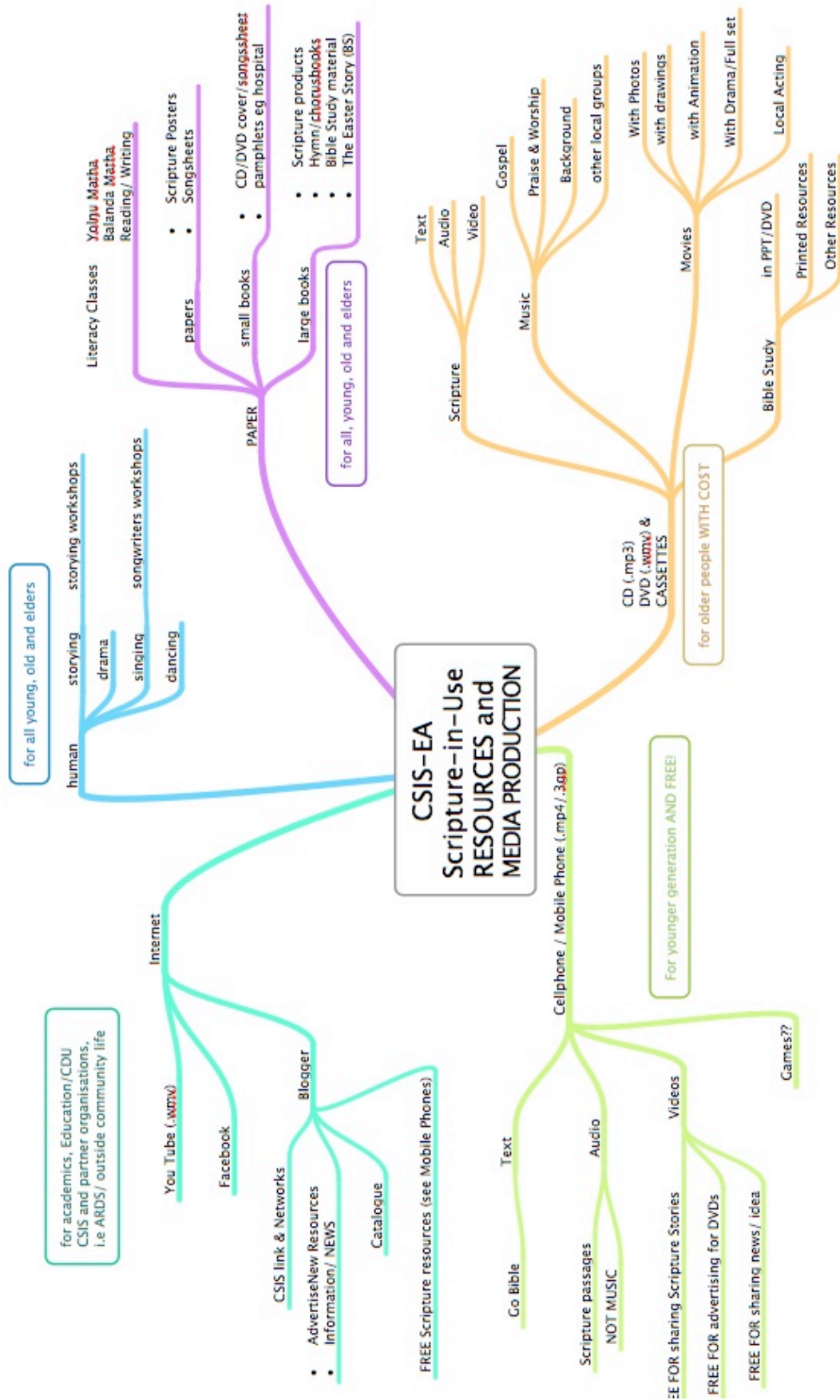
Alongside these continuing and emerging Bible translations, four workers are devoted to the CSIS ‘Scripture in Use’ project.

“The primary reason to start has been to identify, develop and provide pathways to access the Scriptures in Indigenous languages. This has to be the church’s responsibility and opportunity to meet the unique needs of its own church family. Not only does the ‘Scripture text’ need to be in an understandable and intelligible form but to have follow up with appropriate pathways for access of the text.”

*Margaret Miller, Galiwin’ku*

The chart below illustrates the great breadth of services and materials being developed by the Scripture in Use team in North East Arnhem. Scripture in Use workers are producing materials for different age groups, in different media and multimedia, and in the various clan languages as translations become available.

Chart: Scripture in Use Services & Resources in North East Arnhem Land



## West Arnhem

### •Maung

The Maung Translation project is based in Warruwi, Goulburn Island, and involves three local Indigenous people, one church support worker in Jabiru, and two supportive linguists who are based in Victoria and Darwin. These Scripture workers have attended various CSIS workshops in translation, and are continuing translation around full-time jobs in the community, and various family commitments.

After some years in retirement in Victoria, Heather Hewett has visited Warruwi to encourage Indigenous Christians who are beginning translation work in Maung. She reports,

Since 2009, I've been part of several workshops in Darwin where Nancy and Rosemary began translation of the book of Mark, and on Warruwi where Rosemary and Nancy and Sandra translated from Kunwinjku into Maung with input from Elizabeth and Annie, Kunwinjku speakers. 'Ngapi ngamin marmarr mira ta ngamurnanganinyka ngatjama ngatjirtiki God nuyu ja jurra.'  
*I am very happy that I've come back (and that) we are helping each other (as) we work on God's Word.*

*Heather Hewett, Horsham (VIC)*

### •Kuninjku

Several Indigenous people from homelands in West Arnhem are in the early stages of translation into Kuninjku, a language related to, but distinct from Kunwinjku. Though a Kunwinjku Gospel of Mark is in the final stages of checking, people of the Kuninjku language sense its inadequacy for their own use in church and worship. The Presbytery (NRCC) support worker elaborates,

"The translation of Kunwinjku to Kuninjku is a real eye-opener for me on the importance of using the language of the people... (and) the importance of turning Scripture into song. In the work being done by Leon and Noelene, they're producing CD's which they sell to finance their work. They really want to get stuck into the Kuninjku translation."

*Lindsay Parkhill, Jabiru*

## West Kimberley

In 2009 and 2010, the CSIS Worrorra language project involved two competent, elderly speakers of Worrorra, one CSIS project officer, and collaboration with the Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation and the Kimberley Language Resource Centre. This project is unique from other CSIS projects, because the focus is language revitalisation, rather than maintenance. Workshops held in Mowanjum or Derby have covered Worrorra Christian songs, Bible stories, and lectionary readings. Below is a brief inventory of language work consolidated, databased, recorded and revised by Howard Amery and others in recent years:

- Mark and Luke's Gospels (Worrorra, from JRB Love, 1930) - 5000+ entries
- Worrorra Dictionaries - 4500+ entries
- West Kimberley Place Names
- Mowanjum Names
- Audio recordings, Janet Oobagooma, Worrorra
- Lectionary Readings from the Gospel of Mark - revised and compiled for congregational use
- Good Samaritan, Draft stage
- English-Worrorra & Ngarinyin - 220 entries on kinship and health

This project is in recess, due to a current lack of funding and staff support. In response to requests by Indigenous elders of the congregations in West Kimberley, CSIS and the Presbytery (NRCC) are committed to pursuing partnerships, recruitment and fundraising for continued language and Scripture work in Worrorra, and other West Kimberley languages.

## **Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, Central Australia**

After nearly 10 years in recess, Indigenous Christians in the APY lands are wanting to resume Bible Translation into Pitjantjatjara. The Pitjantjatjara Shorter Bible (2002), contains the entire New Testament and 15% of the Old Testament. The Indigenous Scripture workers who were most involved in the translation of the Shorter Bible, are now mentoring a younger generation of Anangu people who are engaging with the completion of the Old Testament. Though many of these volunteers are literate in English, and engaged in full-time employment in the Department of Education, they highlight their main motivations in translation.

“We would like to begin translating the rest of the Old Testament into Pitjantjatjara.”

*Katrina Tjitayi, Pukatja*

“The Old Testament contains lots of good stories that we can learn from...We need to have all of God’s Word in our language, so that we can all understand it well.”

*Makinti Minutjukur, Pukatja*

This Pitjantjatjara Old Testament project is in the early stages, but already more than 100 Anangu people have expressed interest in the translation work. The first training workshop was held in Amata community in July, and was attended by more than 15 local people over the period of a week. Training was offered jointly by the NRCC, Bible Society Australia, and AuSIL; CSIS provided general funding and support for the workshop. It is planned that similar workshops will be held in communities around the APY lands in months and years to come, in support of the Indigenous Scripture workers who are committed to this translation activity. Some of the workshop participants from Amata reflect on their experiences below,

“My name is Deborah Burton and I’m 40 yrs old. And I’ve been attending this workshop and learning some really good stuff. Many of us have gathered together, and we’ve been translating as a team from English into Pitjantjatjara, passages from the Old Testament. This has been a wonderful experience that we’ve had from Monday to Friday. This is the first time I’ve tried this work, and I’ve found it really exhilarating. We’ve all thought, ‘this is great work to be doing.’ We’re younger people, than those who have done it before and we’re really happy to be doing it.”

*Deborah Burton, Amata*

“...we had to think hard about what words we wanted to use, and make sure that they were good and accurate words. As we worked like this, we really loved it - that we were doing this translation from God’s Word. There was such joy in doing it. It was the first time that we were doing like this.”

*Nyunmiti Burton, Amata*

There is a strong sense that the translation of the Pitjantjatjara Old Testament should be widely understood and used by all age groups around the APY communities; this is a driving technique in Bible translation, as elaborated by Nyunmiti,

“Someone would do the first draft, and then the rest of us would make comments or suggestions to improve that. We’d discuss various renderings to come up with the best translation. We would think about what language to use so it would be clear for our children. At first, we might put in some older words, but we had to think about our younger people and make sure that we only put in words that they would understand.”

*Nyunmiti Burton, Amata*

It is estimated that the Old Testament Project could take 15 years to complete - members of the translation group are hoping that this will be the first completed Bible in a traditional Indigenous language of Australia. The president of the Uniting Church in Australia, Rev Alistair Macrae has expressed his support for this project.

“I’ve recently learnt about this project to translate the Old Testament into Pitjantjatjara. They do of course have a New Testament already, but their hunger for the Word is such that they want the whole book. So, a very big project, a lot of enthusiasm on the ground, really good support through CSIS - which is an agency of the Northern Synod of the Uniting Church... The local people are providing just out of their faithfulness so much of the expertise and the energy for this project... considering the fruit that such a project could bear, it would be a real shame if the whole church didn’t get behind it.”

*Rev Alistair Macrae, President, UCA*

## Support structures

Though CSIS receives no direct support from Government, respondents list several supportive structures, both of the wider CSIS entity, and the individual language projects within.

“CSIS gets no support from the Government for its language projects. There are some funds from the church, but mostly CSIS finances come through fundraising efforts.”

*Maratja Dhamarrandji, Galiwin'ku*

“The project is an initiative of the Uniting Church in Australia and has a variety of para-church organisations in partnership; e.g. Bible Society Australia, AuSIL, etc. Significantly, each language project requires help of from within its own language group to provide volunteers, and support towards its volunteers.”

*Margaret Miller, Galiwin'ku*

“We have been using a lot of our own initiative in anticipation that this will inspire support in the future. Northern Territory Christian Schools have supported the learning of Warramiri at Gäwa (homeland centre on Elcho Island). AuSIL have provided computers and expenses for the ‘Our Word’ workshops.”

*Dorothy Bepuka, Galiwin'ku*

“We have received help with two new computers from ALPA (Arnhem Land Progress Association - food stores) for our Dhanu'mi project.”

*Djawut Gonḍarra, Galiwin'ku*

“We’ve got a program called “Our Word” supported by AuSIL for translating Scriptures into different languages. It’s touching peoples lives and is very effective.”

*Yurranydjil Dhurrkay, Galiwin'ku*

One major objective of CSIS in ‘Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures’, is to grow relationships within and between Indigenous communities and regions. Quarterly Reference Committee meetings offer an opportunity for Indigenous representatives from around the regions to share stories and encouragement together. CSIS also raises broad awareness of Indigenous languages and Scripture work, to promote partnership with individuals, small groups, churches, companies and organisations around Australia. The primary means of communication is through the publication and distribution of a quarterly newsletter, ‘CoordN8’. (A recent edition of this publication is added to this submission as an appendix; articles are also available at [www.csis.org.au](http://www.csis.org.au)).

In an attempt to compound church and community support for Indigenous Scripture work, CSIS plans to submit an application for Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status with the Australian Taxation Office. Recent Indigenous language policy has given some provision for DGR status of organisations conducting language recording and maintenance projects.

## Schools

In answer to question four, Margaret Miller (CSIS-EA Scripture in Use facilitator) makes an important observation about organic networking in Indigenous language work, which often includes the work of the church.

“Some support is given by the schools, with staff engaging in and supporting this (Scripture) project, by personnel assistance, IT support. The schools in turn receive support and encouragement in their language programs by various workers of CSIS. There lies a mutually beneficial relationship.”

*Margaret Miller, Galiwin'ku*

In Yolŋu communities, families and elders have been resolute about the use of their own languages in school; language is recognised as a vital part of community life and therefore essential in the school careers of their children.

“There have been officially 3 Bilingual Schools that began in the mid-1970’s that have developed a formal English / Yolŋu Matha language programs in North East Arnhem. The Two Way learning programs introduced into schools in the 1990’s addresses the two other larger community schools with their Indigenous language needs. Of the 20 Indigenous Homeland schools in North East Arnhem land, schooling is primarily provided in their local language by Indigenous teaching staff who are living on site, of which 2 homelands are now part of the Northern Territory Christian Schools Association. This has created a wide range of language policies and methodologies with



Indigenous languages. Government Schools are reeling from a political decision made by the NT Government in October 2008 to abandon Indigenous languages in the first 4 hours of their school day.”

*Margaret Miller, Galiwin'ku*

“The children are given lessons in Warramiri in the (Christian) school program at Gäwa. For special language programs in the school, Warramiri becomes the medium of instruction. It is also included in the cultural program at the larger local community school. It is the language program at Gäwa and particularly taught to children for them to recognise its uniqueness to other languages in the Yolŋu Matha cluster. As part of the language programs that are offered at both Gäwa Christian School and the local public school, Shepherdson College, on Elcho Island the children are encouraged in their attendance.”

*Dorothy Bepuka, Galiwin'ku*

“There is not much happening for my language (Dhaŋu'mi, Goŋumala) in the school now, but there was work going on with Dhaŋu'mi in the past at the school. There was literature produced there, a classroom of children in Dhaŋu'mi and a Gälpu dictionary being produced. When the classes were existing, there were many Dhaŋu'mi children going to school. These children have grown up now and are speaking their language fluently.”

*Djawut Gondarra, Galiwin'ku*

“The children are using their language through instruction in the classroom at the local school. The playgroup children through to about grade 3 are not reading in their language in the school. (The books are read by their parents or teachers to them in the younger ages). The children in the school are reading and writing in later years around Yr4-6 and up to Yr 12 in Djambarrpuynu and Gupapuyŋu languages. On Fridays we have cultural program in the school when the children have a wider experience of languages from the community. The children join in with what's there at the school. The overall performance of the children in my family has been at the benchmark or well over the benchmark.”

*Mätjarra Garrawurra, Ramingingin*

“They're very good at the school, the teaching team. I've heard that even in the senior management, that we want to keep the language, and teach the language. I've heard the education department say that, the Dhuwaya language, I heard that just recently, a couple of times.”

*Marrpalawuy Marika, Yirrkala*

“The kids come anyway because I think they want to learn both (English & Yolŋu Matha). But it's not the language that stops the kids coming to school. I think it's other things that are stopping them. Too many outings, too much playing, they don't come to bed early, other things like, kids want to stay out long, and watch or play, and then they want to come home for sleep. It's not for us, who are doing the translation, it's for parents, really it's parents' Djäma (job) to make kids go to school. We haven't been asking, kids, “do you like coming to school?” We don't ask them, if they want to learn, or if there are other things in the family. There could be fighting, or playing cards, or drinking kava, and the parents are awake all night. Kids want to be with parents, kids want their parents to be with them. Those are the things that are stopping the kids from going to school. The school is there, waiting, for the kids to come to school. So I think it (the language) is not the problem, it's the problems at home.”

*Dundiwuy Wunungmurra, Yirrkala*



### #3 The potential benefits of including Indigenous languages in early education

In the questionnaire responses, one warm anecdote illustrates a benefit of including Indigenous language in early education. Older generations are pleased when the younger generations exercise Indigenous literacy, even in novel ways. Language, in all of its many forms, builds relationship and connection.

“It (language education) has made a great impact to me especially, because I can see that my grandchild - she texts messages to me in Dhuwaya. And that brings joy to me to see her use that. She doesn't mix it with English, just plain Dhuwaya. Here is my grandchild, trying to SMS in a language that she has grown up with, that makes me proud to see that! If it wasn't for the school, she couldn't do that.”

*Marrpalawuy Marika, Yirrkala*

Many potential benefits of including language and literacy in early childhood are widely recognised in mainstream education, and are no less valid in the case of Indigenous language communities. An early introduction to literacy, in the language, and ideally in the context of the family, is a headstart to healthy education.

“The fire of literacy is created by the emotional sparks between a child, a book, and the person reading. It isn’t achieved by the book alone, nor by the child alone, nor by the adult who’s reading aloud- it’s the relationship winding between all three, bringing them together in easy harmony.”

*Mem Fox, Reading Magic: why reading aloud to our children will change their lives forever<sup>2</sup>*

To this end, language policy and investment would ideally extend beyond bilingual education, to include community library, press and printing services. CSIS welcomes broad networks to foster Indigenous languages in education and use.



#### **#4 Measures to improve education outcomes in those Indigenous communities where English is a second language.**

It is clear from the broad range of responses given above, that there exists a degree of confusion in communities about implications of current education policy. In the face of uncertainty and shifting policy within community schools, there remains a broad, common-sense commitment to Indigenous languages. In all of the communities represented by CSIS, English is a foreign language. There was broad agreement that early and extensive instruction in Indigenous languages is a factor in attendance and academic performance. There was no mention of any alternative measures to improve education outcomes in communities. One CSIS facilitator notes the damage caused by such instability, and recommends a much more sustained approach to language and education policy.

“...today I was informed that there has been an acceptance by the NT Department of Education this year, that Shepherdson College has now become a legitimate and active Bilingual Program. What was a political storm in the debunking of Bilingual Education and the introduction of the first 4 hours of Schooling to be in English, has now had no public acknowledgement of the damage caused of such ‘rough-shod’ policies that have now been removed on the return the Bilingual Program. Programs in Indigenous languages need to be protected from this kind of ‘cowboy-style’ politics of recent years. The Indigenous language of the children is too valuable to be a football of partisan politics. A consistent and committed approach by the NT Education Department and its agencies would help any program become effective.”

*Margaret Miller, Galiwin’ku*

#### **Translation & Interpreting Services**

In answer to question 6., there were two types of responses. Some Scripture workers pointed out the fact that they are the only local people providing services in particular clan languages.

“There are no other translation and interpreting services available (in Golumala), other than the translation work that I am presently doing with ‘Our Word.’”

*Djawut Gondarra, Galiwin’ku*

Other respondents recognised that there is some Yolŋu interpreting available, though it emerged that this interpreting is often provided informally by a family member who is more competent in English. Yolŋu recognise that in all job placements and families, they are required on occasions to understand or even interpret English. It is difficult to measure how effective this informal interpreting is in different contexts. Anecdotal evidence suggests that messages are not conveyed well by such means.

“Yes, we have that (interpreting). I’ve seen that in court too, we have interpreting in the court system. And I think broadly, when you see it, I think translating and interpreting is any work. We need to translate for doctors or other Njapaki (non-Indigenous people), visiting the community. We need to interpret, because not many Yolŋu understand the Njapaki, so it’s good to have that. All Yolŋu, right across the whole of the NT, we need to be able to have interpreting, because we speak in our languages more, and English is a second language.”

*Marrpalawuy Marika, Yirrkala*

“There is an attitude towards the task of interpreting and translating services that this is a task for any Indigenous person who displays confidence in the English language. This is fraught with problems... Translators within CSIS are regularly sought out for their services in interpreting and

---

<sup>2</sup> Fox, Mem. *Reading Magic*. Harcourt : New York, 2001.  
CSIS - Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures

translating as they are some of the most trained and experienced in this field of work. For some CSIS workers that experience accumulates up to over 25 years.”

*Margaret Miller, Galiwin'ku*

## **Impact**

In answer to question 4c., Indigenous Scripture workers were able to list a number of ways in which Indigenous language activities have helped their communities.

“I encourage Bible readings in the church in language, recording songs in language and sermons, along with radio work etc. This work has been a blessing to us, individually, but also our community has benefitted from it. Individually as trained Bible translators and interpreters, through the training and experience we have gained, we are literate in both English and our local vernacular. Above all as a community, we are gaining our own Bibles, God’s word in our own respective clan groups and languages.”

*Maratja Dhamarrandji, Galiwin'ku*

“This project helps the community to recognise and value the uniqueness of Dhanu’mi language and that it is there for people to pass on, and learn, and to show other language groups by example that they can do this work too.”

*Djawut Gondarra, Galiwin'ku*

“Members of the community are saying they like the work I do as they can understand it, especially if it is in a book or story.... When I use the Gupapuyŋu I receive very encouraging responses from others.”

*Mätjarra Garrawurra, Ramingining*

“We read (Scripture) with Gumatj at the funeral. Sometimes I read in the church too - Gumatj. We want to share that word in Gumatj or in Dhuwaya or in Dhay’yi. It’s good for Yolŋu to hear us speaking two languages, English and Yolŋu, it’s a deeper understanding when we hear our own language spoken, especially the Scriptures.”

*Marrpalawuy Marika, Yirrkala*

“CSIS Scriptures and Scripture in Use activities are there to benefit the whole community by way of addressing heart issues, promoting identity through the use of the Indigenous languages and the message that it carries. The project provides assistance to people emotionally, spiritually and mentally, and also provides motivation to learn to read and write in one’s own language and consequently that of other languages.”

*Margaret Miller, Galiwin'ku*

In Central Australia, Paul Eckert (Bible Society Australia) has recorded the uptake of the Pitjantjatjara Shorter Bible, originally published in 2002. In less than 10 years, nearly 2000 copies of the Pitjantjatjara Bible have been sold around the APY Lands; this reflects a great interest and engagement with the Bible produced by the Pitjantjatjara Bible Translation Project (PBTP).

“750 books were printed in 2002, and during the intervening 9 years there have been two more reprints of 500, and 700, so Tjukurpa Palya is being well used by the Pitjantjatjara people, a group of around 3,000. It is used extensively in church services and other Christian gatherings, as well as by individual Christians at home and in Bible studies.”

*Paul Eckert, Adelaide*

At the dedication of the Djambarrpuyŋu New Testament in 2008, then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd MP sent the following message of recognition,

“...This is a historic moment for Elcho Island and for many nearby communities. Throughout history, the publication of a translation of the Bible into local languages has often been a transforming moment for local communities. This makes it possible for people to hear and understand the Bible in the language they use everyday, giving them an understanding that is not possible when reading it in a different language.”

*Honourable Kevin Rudd, MP, 7/6/2008*



## #5 The educational and vocational benefits of ensuring English language competency amongst Indigenous communities.

Many of the translators who have been involved in Bible Translation in recent decades are otherwise employed in their communities. These positions range from health and language work with Aboriginal Resource Development Service (ARDS), teaching and mentoring positions in schools, police and legal interpreting services, and various other roles involving language and interpreting. It is abundantly clear that language competency in one's own Indigenous language *and* English leads to myriad vocational opportunities - in fact, more than the Indigenous Scripture workers can realistically pursue.

"Translators within CSIS are regularly sought out for their services in Interpreting and translating as they are some of the most trained and experienced in this field of work. For some CSIS workers that experience accumulates up to over 25 years."

*Margaret Miller, Galiwin'ku*

"This work has been a blessing to us, individually, but also our community has benefitted from it. Individually as trained Bible translators and interpreters, through the training and experience we have gained, we are literate in both English and our local vernacular."

*Maratja Dhamarrandji, Galiwin'ku*

Many Indigenous Scripture workers around the four regions of CSIS attribute their high levels of literacy in English and Indigenous languages to mission schooling. Nancy Sheppard reports of her years in Pukatja, 1955-1963<sup>3</sup>

"It was a Christian mission, a Presbyterian mission, but we were not to interfere with the people's beliefs or way of life and we were supposed to lead a Christian life and they could adopt that or not, as they wished. But there was to be no coercion. The children, he said, all those years ago, 60 years ago, that the children were to be taught in their own language. They were to be totally acceptable as they were."

*Nancy Sheppard, former missionary*

In recent years, the South Australian Department of Education has maintained a level of support for Indigenous languages in school. This is reflected in the School Principal's recent report,

"We are committed to children being strong in Pitjantjatjara. We know educationally that children that are strong in first language are going to be stronger in our new language. There is really strong research and evidence that suggests that the children that went through the mission school era were well educated and literate as adults."

*Lisa Salomon, Pukatja*

English language competency and literacy should not be considered in isolation from first language literacy - Indigenous Australians should be entitled to the many educational and vocational benefits of language competency in their own languages and English.



## #6 Measures to improve Indigenous language interpreting and translating services.

Interpreting is a professional task that requires training in (at least) two languages, including the local language of the translator and English. Indigenous communities depend on expert interpreting and translation, to be provided by those who are respected on all sides for their skills and knowledge, also in the particular field of work (eg: medical, legal, etc.).

Dictionary development is an important aspect of this issue, for example, the recent publication of the Djambarrpuyngu Health Dictionary (ARDS, 2010) makes available a tested vocabulary for communication about health and illness. Much work remains to be done in this area.

---

<sup>3</sup> Compass, *Ernabella: No Ordinary Mission*. ABC Television, 22nd April 2011.

<http://www.abc.net.au/compass/s3177987.htm>

CSIS - Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures

CSIS draws on the expertise of AuSIL and other partner organisations to produce high quality translations of the Bible, and to check the integrity of other resources produced to accompany Scripture.

## Difficulties

The following responses to question seven represent the many difficulties encountered by Scripture and language workers around the four regions of CSIS. One main fact underlying these difficulties, is that Indigenous language workers are embarking on their respective projects in a voluntary capacity. Most of these Indigenous Scripture workers occupy paid positions in their communities, and juggle all of these responsibilities with family commitments also.

“The main difficulty facing our project is the lack of financial support.”

*Maratja Dhamarrandji, Galiwin'ku*

“Our main difficulty is to have the elders prepared and ready to teach the children.”

*Dorothy Bepuka, Galiwin'ku*

“We face technological difficulties with the computers that hold us back.”

*Djawut Gondarra, Galiwin'ku*

“There is no office or good facilities for me to work in. I still enjoy my work wherever. With the Gupapuyngu project, I have only had a few people working on this. In the Ganalbinu project, this is too early to say. Older ladies are very interested to start. In the Liyagawumirr project, they are covered by a lot of the Djambarrpuyngu work. There are similarities but also differences between the two languages. I am not in near proximity (geographically or socially) to my Liyagawumirr family.”

*Mätjarra Garrawurra, Ramingining*

“I think not many Yolngu know that we are doing this translation work, I don't know if they are talking about our work, or I don't know if there is a lot of language involvement in other areas, in the workplace. It's sort of a change for us, for me, because we speak our languages, and we want to put the languages into writing. It's good for us, sort of a change... I really want other Yolngu to support, other people to help do the work, because sometimes we are dragged off by our families, you know, other things. We leave the Djäma (work) until we are free, we come back. Otherwise, I love doing the wording from Djambarrpuyngu into Dhuwaya.”

*Dundiwuy Wunungmurra, Yirrkala*

“With my project, I'm a full time employee, and the workload makes it difficult to be able to do the Scriptures. I haven't had the time, and my work is very hard. The only time, is in my spare time, that's how it is with this project. Also I find it difficult because there aren't enough Yolngu, I want to be able to translate together, and be like a team.”

*Marrpalawuy Marika, Yirrkala*

“Community apathy and disengagement with the workplace and its related stresses when engaging in a wider non-Indigenous world that seems to be very changeable with its authority, its policies and activities. Exhaustion reigns for those involved in translation and interpreting services who are at the coal face of cross-cultural communications between Government agencies and community. Youth are not expressing commitment towards the projects needs for workers and its future.”

*Margaret Miller, Galiwin'ku*

These responses from North East Arnhem reflect many of the difficulties faced around the other three regions of CSIS: West Arnhem, West Kimberley and Central Australia. As mentioned earlier under the section, 'Groups & Projects; Activities, Recording & Use', the West Kimberley project is in recess because the church is lacking support personnel and funds. Though the partnership with Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation and the resident linguist has been fruitful, local politics have played a part in slowing the Worrorra language work.



### #7 The effectiveness of current maintenance and revitalisation programs for Indigenous languages.

It is beyond this scope of this paper to evaluate the effectiveness of current maintenance and revitalisation programs for Indigenous languages - none of the Indigenous Scripture workers commented on language programs other than the Scripture projects supported by CSIS.

There is scope for language maintenance and revitalisation programs to more effectively interface with CSIS and other non-government organisations engaged in language work. Some networking happens quite naturally 'on the CSIS - Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures

ground' (eg: Kimberley Language Centre; Shepherdson College, Galiwin'ku). However, there is potential for much more sharing of knowledge and resources, especially with the increasing accessibility of internet and social media.



## #8 The effectiveness of Commonwealth Government Indigenous languages policy in delivering its objectives and relevant policies of other Australian governments.

CSIS has not focused on evaluation of Government policy relating to Indigenous languages. CSIS recommends that all funding directed to assist Indigenous people to maintain and revitalise languages (in many vocational and cultural contexts), is a major cultural investment for Australia.

### Aspirations & Conclusion

In conclusion, we list here responses to the final question eight, of the questionnaire, "what are you aiming to achieve in the future?" These responses continue the dual themes of this submission:

- the importance of having Indigenous languages recorded and maintained, and
- the desire of Indigenous churches to have the Bible and Christian resources available in Indigenous languages.

"We hope to achieve a few more New Testaments in the Yolŋu Matha cluster of languages through a computer-assisted program called 'Our Word'."

*Maratja Dhamarrandji, Galiwin'ku*

"Primarily to assist in the further development of CSIS; to build on our vision for healthy and robust Indigenous Scripture activity growing from Yolŋu initiatives and supported by the church and its congregations. Of course this includes positive 'spin-offs' at all levels of community life, with people empowerment and community self-worth."

*Margaret Miller,  
Galiwin'ku*

"We hope that by this project we will 'plant a seed' for future interest in our language (Warramirri) and increase its value within the whole community as a contributor to the Yolŋu Matha group, i.e. in its similarities and differences to other Yolŋu languages, and how it connects with the variety of languages, and their clans that exist together in North East Arnhem."

*Dorothy Bepuka, Galiwin'ku*

"My aim is that all Wangurri people all over Arnhem Land will be able to read the Bible in our own language, i.e. Wangurri, and will be able to speak the language fluently."

*Yurranydjil Dhurrkay, Galiwin'ku*

"I am aiming to see this work grow so that it is as strong as the other Yolŋu languages around this region and to see it produced in a book."

*Djawut Gondarra, Galiwin'ku*

"I am sure in myself that I am helping Gupapuyŋu to become independent, and that in the future they will be taking up this work for themselves. I would like to be working closely with my mother more in the future in the Ganalbinju language."

*Mätjarra Garrawurra, Ramingining*

"I want that book to be finished. You know, I want it to be finished. Because from Djambarrpuyŋu to Dhuwaya, in Djambarrpuyŋu there are many, many small words, I am making it short. Straight Dhäruk (language). Sometimes, when I don't get it, I look in my Bible, I read that in English, then put that in Yolŋu writing, typing."

*Dunḍiwuy Wunungmurra, Yirrkala*

"To be able to finish Mark's Gospel, just the book of Mark. I know it will take time to finish the whole Scripture, or the New Testament. In the near future, I want to be able to do that (Gospel). Time is very limited, because of my work, but I want to be able to read in my own language, in Dhay'yi, not only for me, but the whole community, especially for Dhay'yi people here in Yirrkala and in the homelands. Whether it be the whole Bible, or whether it be in a small book, you know, the stories that other children can be able to read Dhay'yi. Even the stories that have been given to the children, and to us, from our forefathers. I know that I can't do it on my own. I need a team. Within my own family, or other communities. To read, and to keep the language strong. Because

I've always seen that language is important, that God has given for all of us. I think that in some ways, we Yolŋu are very lucky to still have our elders living. And they have always been the backbone of the language, the backbone of all our culture. Especially our language, that we continue teaching our children and speaking, and writing, is important too."

*Marrpaḷawuy Marika, Yirrkala*



# Recommendations

CSIS would like to make the following recommendations to the House of Representatives' Standing Committee for the Inquiry into Language Learning in Indigenous Communities:

1. Indigenous languages in use around remote parts of Australia should be given due recognition in education, public services, and other areas of policy;
2. Additional funding should be provided to language activities in which Indigenous Australians are directly involved in the generation of Indigenous language resources;
3. Government should encourage and invest in networks to encourage the sharing of knowledge about Indigenous languages, and resources in Indigenous languages: libraries, publishing, online networks, databases, scholarly material, etc.
4. Taxation policy should be reviewed so that non-government organisations receiving donations in support of Indigenous language revitalisation or maintenance can achieve Donor Gift Recipient (DGR) status.

# Interviews

## DJAMBARRPUYŊU PROJECT

### **Maratja Dhamarrandji**

Galiwin'ku, North East Arnhem Land

#### **1. What are the languages spoken in your community?**

There are many languages spoken in my community at Galiwinku, Elcho Island. In the East Arnhem Land region, we call ourselves the Yolŋu people. That includes our respective languages in each clan, and tribal groups, of both Dhuwa and Yirritja moieties. We are all related to one another, and so are our Yolŋu languages. Although we still understand each other, we each have different dialects that make us unique and different from each other. The main language spoken at Elcho Island is Djambarrpuyŋu. That is also my language.

#### **2. How well are they spoken by children, adults and elders?**

Djambarrpuyŋu is the 'lingua franca' ie. common language at Elcho, and in most East Arnhem Land communities. It is spoken well by children, adults and elders.

#### **3. Describe your group and project:**

The project that I am involved in is Co-ordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures (CSIS), in North East Arnhemland.

- CSIS is an initiative of the UCA primarily for Bible Translation work.
- Bible Translation work has been running for over 30 years.
- Working with adults 30 - 50yrs old
- Maybe 7 to 10 people altogether on the Djambarrpuyŋu language.

#### **4. What activities do you do to record or encourage the use of languages, including local languages?**

I encourage Bible readings in the church in language, recording songs in language and sermons, along with radio work etc.

- This work has been a blessing to us, individually, but also our community has benefitted from it. Individually as trained Bible translators and interpreters, through the training and experience we have gained, we are literate in both English and our local vernacular. Above all as a community, we are gaining our own Bibles, God's word in our own respective clan groups and languages.
- CSIS gets no support from the Government for its language projects

#### **5. How are your local languages taught in school?**

Our school at Shepherdson College encourages Yolŋu Matha, our language in our cultural space, but also the assistant teachers are encouraged to use Yolŋu Matha to explain concepts in Yolŋu Matha.

#### **6. What interpreting and translating services are available in your local languages? How useful and effective are they?**

see point 4.

#### **7. What are the main difficulties facing your project?**

CSIS gets no support from the Government for its language projects. There are some funds from the church but mostly CSIS finances come through fund-raising efforts. The main difficulty facing our project is the lack of financial support.

#### **8. What are you aiming to achieve in the future?**

We hope to achieve a few more New Testaments in the Yolŋu Matha cluster of languages through a computer-assisted program called 'Our Word'.

## WARRAMIRI PROJECT

### **Dorothy Bepuka**

Galiwin'ku & Gäwa, North East Arnhem Land

#### **1. What are the languages spoken in your community?**

The Djaŋu'mi language community of Warramiri includes also one of the branches of Gupapuyŋu that is 'djaŋu'mi yän' – not 'dhuwala'). The Djaŋu'mi are connected along the northern coastline in north east of Arnhemland (raŋiwuy). and part of the larger group of yolŋu matha speakers of NE Arnhem languages.

#### **2. How well are they spoken by children, adults and elders?**

Mostly elders are the ones using 'djaŋu'mi'. This language was stronger in past generations (the parents and grandparents of the elders today). A few adults are still using their language today, but the children are not learning this language well. Children are not using this language fluently now and only hear a little.

#### **3. Describe your group and project:**

For djaŋu'mi;

- So people will know this language, that it exists, and will remain and not be lost.
- Since 2009 we have joined in the CSIS Our Word project
- Elders are the main ones involved
- Only a few families

#### **4. What activities do you do to record or encourage the use of languages, including local languages?**

The Djaŋu'mi language is being recorded onto the computer using the 'Our Word' program designed for Scripture work. In the family we encourage conversations in the language.

- The children are given lessons in Warramiri in the school program at Gäwa.
- We have been using a lot of our own initiative in anticipation that this will inspire support in the future. Northern Territory Christian Schools have supported the learning of Warramiri at Gäwa and AuSIL have provided computers and travel expenses for the 'Our Word' workshops.
- We hope that by this project we will 'plant a seed' for future interest in our language and increase it's value within the whole community as a contributor to the yolŋu matha group, i.e. in it's similarities and differences to other yolŋu languages and how it connects with the variety of languages and their clans that exist together in North East Arnhem.

#### **5. How are your local languages taught in school?**

For special language programs in the school, Warramiri becomes the medium of instruction. It is also included in the cultural program at the larger local community school. It is the language program at Gäwa and particularly taught to children for them to recognise it's uniqueness to other languages in the Yolŋu Matha cluster.

- As part of the language programs that are offered at both Gäwa Christian School and the local public school, Shepherdson College, on Elcho Island the children are encouraged in their attendance.

#### **6. What interpreting and translating services are available in your local languages? How useful and effective are they?**

No Government interpreting and translating services are available in Djaŋu'mi.

#### **7. What are the main difficulties facing your project?**

Our main difficulty is to have the elders prepared and ready to teach the children.

#### **8. What are you aiming to achieve in the future?**

We are aiming that the children will be able to use and maintain their Djaŋu'mi language in the future.

## GOLUMALA PROJECT

### **Djawuṭ Goṇḍarra**

Galiwin'ku, North East Arnhem Land

#### **1. What are the languages spoken in your community?**

Djambarrpuyṅu is the main language spoken in my community.

#### **2. How well are they spoken by children, adults and elders?**

Only the elders are speaking Golumala

#### **3. Describe your group and project:**

Golumala is part of the dhanju'mi language group. I am working with four clans that are within the dhanju'mi group, i.e. Golumala, Gälpu, Njaimil and Rirratjinju. My project is Golumala Bible Translation.

- When I saw that the Timor languages were translating the Bible using the 'Our Word' program, I could see that it was possible for me to also do this work. It motivated me to record my own language.
- We started this work in 2009 when Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures (CSIS) held a workshop for people interested in 'Our Word'.
- I have been working on this first with another elder Golumala lady joining me later.
- Two people are working now and we are waiting for other dhanju'mi clans to join us

#### **4. What activities do you do to record or encourage the use of languages, including local languages?**

I am presently typing all the language work on the "our Word" program on the computer.

- The local school does not get involved
- The Government does not help us, but we have received help with two new computers from ALPA (Arnhem Land Progress Association - food stores) for our dhanju'mi project.
- This project helps the community to recognise and value the uniqueness of dhanju'mi language and that it is there for people to pass on, and learn, and to show other language groups by example that they can do this work too.

#### **5. How are your local languages taught in school?**

There is not much happening for my language in the school now, but there was work going on with dhanju'mi in the past at the school. There was literature produced there, a classroom of children in dhanju'mi and a Gälpu dictionary being produced.

- When the classes were existing there were many dhanju'mi children going to school. These children have grown up now and are speaking their language fluently.

#### **6. What interpreting and translating services are available in your local languages? How useful and effective are they?**

There are no other translation and interpreting services available than the translation work that I am presently doing with 'Our Word'.

#### **7. What are the main difficulties facing your project?**

We face technological difficulties with the computers that hold us back.

#### **8. What are you aiming to achieve in the future?**

I am aiming to see this work grow so that it is as strong as the other Yolṅu languages around this region and to see it produced in a book.

## WANGURRI PROJECT

### **Yurranydjil Dhurrkay**

Galiwin'ku, North East Arnhem Land

#### **1. What are the languages spoken in your community?**

The common language spoken at my community (Galiwin'ku) is Djambarrpuyŋu. But that's not all, there's other languages spoken as well such as Warramiri, Dhaŋwaŋu, Gälpu, Golumala, Gumatj, Liyaguwumirr (close to Djambarrpuyŋu), Gupapuyŋu, and my own Wangurri.

#### **2. How well are they spoken by children, adults and elders?**

The children mostly speak the common language, Djambarrpuyŋu, but there are some children who speak Gälpu, but there are children at our Wangurri homeland base who are speaking their own language Wangurri. In Galiwin'ku the adults and the elders speak their own languages.

#### **3. Describe your group and project:**

I come from a group/tribe called "Wangurri". The project I'm doing now is the Wangurri Translation of the Bible as part of Co-ordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures (CSIS).

- If I can hear the Scripture in my language I can feel I am a part of the whole of life, and the Scriptures can be available to my group as well, just like they are for everyone else. I too can be, and am related to my Creator through the Scriptures.
- I started the Wangurri project in 2009, but this has been latent as a vision for a long time, before my father passed away.
- I work mostly with older people, from 20-50 years old.
- There are many helpers for Wangurri. It started with my father who was close to me when I was working with the Djambarrpuyŋu project, and then another elder Wangurri lady who just recently passed away also gave me lots of encouragement in the early years to pursue this vision for Wangurri.

#### **4. What activities do you do to record or encourage the use of languages, including local languages?**

I use a computer to type Wangurri words in a program called 'Our Word'. There are also some audio recordings of Bible Scriptures in our own languages to be put on the radio for all people to listen to and then in that way they feel encouraged.

- The schools are not involved in our Wangurri language project
- The government doesn't help with this work, but we do receive some support from CSIS.
- The Scriptures are there for every group/tribe; it is like the distribution of the turtle meat, we culturally have laws for distribution of the meat so that no one misses out. This work is for the benefit of the whole community.

#### **5. How are your local languages taught in school?**

Not happening.

#### **6. What interpreting and translating services are available in your local languages? How useful and effective are they?**

We've got a program called "Our Word" supported by AUSIL for translating scriptures into different languages. It's touching peoples lives and is very effective.

#### **7. What are the main difficulties facing your project?**

The main difficulties are the slowing down of the work. There are not many workers to do the work.

#### **8. What are you aiming to achieve in the future?**

My aim is that all Wangurri people all over Arnhem Land will be able to read the Bible in our own language, i.e. Wangurri, and will be able to speak the language fluently.

## GUPAPUYŊU & GANALBINJU PROJECT

### **Mätjarra Garrawurra**

(with assistance from Banyawarra Malibirr in questions 1 & 2)  
Ramingining

#### **1. What are the languages spoken in your community?**

#### **2. How well are they spoken by children, adults and elders?**

In the school and out in the community, the **language groups** and their clans are;

	Children speak yes (at home) (But Djinan-speaking children use Dhuwal publicly)	Adults speak yes	Elders speak yes
<b>Djinan</b> Wolkpuy Manharrnŋu, Djadiwitji, Bälmbi, Wurrki-ganydjarr, Däbi, Mildjini,			
<b>Wulaki</b>	yes	yes	yes
<b>Djinba</b> Wuduminy,	yes	yes	yes
<b>Djininy</b> Mandhalpuy, Ganalbingu,	yes	yes	yes
<b>Dhuwal</b> Djambarrpuyŋu Liyagalawumirr, Liyagawumirr,	yes	yes	yes
<b>Dhuwala</b> Gupapuyŋu,	yes	yes	yes
<b>Yakuy</b> Wägilak	no (only few speakers live @ R)		yes
Ranybarrŋa	yes	yes	yes

*Only Mätjarra answered the remaining questions as Banyawarra had to return to work at school.*

#### **3. Describe your group and project:**

- So much is written in English, but we have our language orally. It is also important to have our language written. It is good to have the differences of all the dialects (and their clan languages) identified and to know the differences of the vocab and the grammar eg In the Djininy language there are even differences to be noted between the two dialects of Mandhalpuy and Ganalbingu.
- I started my Gupapuyŋu / Ganalbingu / Liyagawumirr project in 2009 (with CSIS)
- I am working with adults (20yr +) and elders
- About 5 are involved, otherwise I am listening and engaging informally with many.

#### **4. What activities do you do to record or encourage the use of languages, including local languages?**

I work with computers to record the languages in my project but also in my other workplaces

- I have been making books for playgroup in Dhuwal language (for a Government Organisation)
- Through this workplace I receive support and also for my training with Family As First Teachers (FAFTS) . I also make posters in the school in language.
- Members of the community are saying they like the work I do as they can understand it, especially if it is in a book or story.

#### **5. How are your local languages taught in school?**

The children are using their language through instruction in the classroom at the local school.

The playgroup children through to about grade3 are not reading in their language in the school. (The books are read by their parents or teachers to them in the younger ages)

The children in the school are reading and writing in later years around Yr4-6 and up to Yr 12 in Djambarrpuyŋu and Gupapuyŋu languages. On Fridays we have cultural program in the school when the children have a wider experience of languages from the community.

- The children join in with what's there at the school. The overall performance of the children in my family has been at the benchmark or well over the benchmark.

GUPAPUYŊU & GANALBIŊU PROJECT (continued)

**6. What interpreting and translating services are available in your local languages? How useful and effective are they?**

Interpreting Services are available in dhuwal, dhuwala, djinan, djininy. through Centrelink, Mission Australia or when there are community meetings or government visitors

**7. What are the main difficulties facing your project?**

Difficulties – There is no office or good facilities for me to work in. I still enjoy my work wherever. Gupapuyŋu project – I have only had a few people working on this. When I use the Gupapuyŋu I receive very encouraging responses from others.

Ganalbiŋu project – This is too early to say. Older ladies are very interested to start.

Łiyagawumirr project - They are covered by a lot of the Djambarrpuyŋu work. There are similarities but also differences between the two languages. I am not in near proximity (geographically or socially) to my Łiyagawumirr family.

**8. What are you aiming to achieve in the future?**

I am sure in myself that I am helping Gupapuyŋu to becoming independent and that in the future they will be taking up this work for themselves. I would like to be working closely with my mother more in the future in the Ganalbiŋu language.

## DHUWAYA & DHAY'YI PROJECTS

### **Dundiwuy Wunungmurra & Marrpalawuy Marika**

Yirrkala, North East Arnhem Land

#### **1. What are the languages spoken in your community?**

Gumatj, Manjalili, Maḍarrpa, Munyuku, Dhaḷwanju, Djarrwark, Djambarrpuyṁu, Djäpu, Daṭiwuy, Marrakulu, Dhudi-Djäpu, Gälpu, Njaimil, Rirratjṁu, Golumala, Wangurri, Warramiri, Malawunjay, Dhuwaya

#### **2. How well are they spoken by children, adults and elders?**

DW: We both know that a lot of the Yolṁu here, around Yirrkala, are speaking Dhuwaya, but a lot of the Njalapal (elders), and the middle aged, and the leaders are speaking their own languages. But we understand each other, what the children are saying to the Njalapal (elders). The Njalapal are understanding the children. All of those languages are spoken well.

#### **3. Describe your group and project:**

*Why was it important to start up?*

DW: We weren't thinking of doing this language, dhäruk djäma, we weren't thinking of that before. But just because of hearing other Yolṁu, Galiwin'ku, Milingimbi, in their languages they can sing praise and worship, hymns, and when we heard that they were doing translation in their languages, that's when it made us want to do one here at Yirrkala. Myself, I was thinking of two languages, Dhuwaya, and Djäpu (Dhuwal). Similar to Djambarrpuyṁu, we understand each other, Djäpu ga Djambarrpuyṁu. We've been having teacher development and work experience djäma (work), that's why I wanted to do this Dhuwaya Dhäruk (language). I had experience in the Djäma (work), working with the bilingual program, teaching the kids, making the resources, from the bottom school, right through to the top school, and it went well for many many years. But when I heard the Galiwin'ku Yolṁu, that they wanted to do this translation, I thought it would be better for us if we did our languages here. So I stopped from Djäma (work) and I wanted to do Scripture, translation. Why? Because I want to see my language in writing. All languages have to be written down, in books, because yalala, we never know, that language will disappear, or it will be gone, for the Djamarkuli (children) of the future, they will look for the language. So that's a good idea, because we're doing this translation, they can run and get the language from the book. There's bayṁu (nothing), no Yolṁu books that are written by Yolṁu. There are resources yes, nowadays, at the school. But with Djorra (books), where you can sit and read, bayṁu (nothing). Because you never know, that language will be gone. And our kids will be without language. So that when they grow up, they can see where that language is, they can run and find it in the papers. That's why we wanted to do our translation in our languages. To put it down. For the children to see later.

MM: We'll keep it strong, for our children to learn, not only orally, speaking, but written. We want to see our kids doing the writing in Dhuwaya.

DW: It helps our kids learn how to read and write. Not only these two or three languages. There are other languages, for other kids. Because in the school, there is not just one tribe, there are many tribes - all these tribes - in the school. We want the Dhay'yi kids to go and see their own books written in Dhay'yi, or Dhuwaya, or Dhuwal, or Dhanu.

*how long have you been running?*

DW & MM: 1 1/2 years

*What age groups are you working with?*

DW: We need a lot of support from the whole community: the family, the adults, whoever is a linguist, like those two old ladies, Gulumbu and Mutilṁa, they should be sort of checking and asking how we are going, we need that kind of support. But because it's Djorra, Bible, we're doing it, God's word, not by itself, but it is the Word of God. So we want to show, and let Yolṁu know that this is what we are doing, it's not just for us, it's for everybody, a written language for Dhuwaya and Dhay'yi.

*How many people are involved?*

DW: Not many people here. We want to know how people are feeling about this.

Wider network: AuSIL, CSIS

#### **4. What activities do you do to record or encourage the use of languages, including local languages?**

*How are the local schools involved?*

MM: The only written language now in the school is Dhuwaya. The school have been trying now for many years to have local people come and teach the language, and the community haven't done that, not only Dhuwaya. It's really up to the Yothu (child), if he really wants to speak his father's language, then he can speak. And the school have been asking for community input.

CSIS - Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures



DW: I think not many Yolŋu know that we are doing this translation work, I don't know if they are talking about our work, or I don't know if there is a lot of language involvement in other areas, in the workplace. It's sort of a change for us, for me, because we speak our languages, and we want to put the languages into writing. It's good for us, sort of a change.

DW: Yolŋu Matha literacy is hard for me.

DW: We get help at the school, with the languages. Lots of help from all different areas in the school. From preschool, right through to secondary. Even with the adults, people coming from other places, from the department, from everywhere. There is still a lot of resources, people come and buy the resources, take them with them, they talk about languages, when people come to visit, government people.

MM: AuSIL, CSIS, translators in East Arnhem, Ramingining, Galiwin'ku, even West Kimberley,

*How has your work helped your community?*

MM: Wait until you see the book finished.

We read (Scripture) with Gumatj at the funeral. Sometimes I read in the church too - Gumatj. We want to share that word in Gumatj or in Dhuwaya or in Dhay'yi. It's good for Yolŋu to hear us speaking two languages, English and Yolŋu, it's a deeper understanding when we hear our own language spoken, especially the Scriptures.

### **5. How are your local languages taught in school?**

DW: The kids come anyway because I think they want to learn both. But it's not the language that stops the kids coming to school. I think it's other things that are stopping them. Too many outings, too much playing, they don't come to bed early, other things like, kids want to stay out long, and watch or play, and then they want to come home for sleep. It's not for us, who are doing the translation, it's for parents, really it's parents' Djäma (job) to make kids go to school. We haven't been asking, kids, "do you like coming to school?" We don't ask them, if they want to learn, or if there are other things in the family. There could be fighting, or playing cards, or drinking kava, and the parents are awake all night. Kids want to be with parents, kids want their parents to be with them. Those are the things that are stopping the kids from going to school. The school is there, waiting, for the kids to come to school. So I think it (the language) is not the problem, it's the problems at home.

MM: At the school, they have Yolŋu Matha lessons and English lessons as well. Even in transition, because I remember reading one of my grandson's work. I've seen his work, they do teach Yolŋu Matha, Dhuwaya, reading and writing. And Yolŋu teachers are involved, they have Yolŋu teachers as well. When it comes to Yolŋu Matha lessons, the Yolŋu want to see the Yolŋu teaching, to get that language right.

MM: It has made a great impact to me especially, because I can see that my grandchild - she texts messages to me in Dhuwaya. And that brings joy to me to see her use that. She doesn't mix it with English, just plain Dhuwaya. Here is my grandchild, trying to SMS in a language that she has grown up with, that makes me proud to see that! If it wasn't for the school, she couldn't do that. They're very good at the school, the teaching team. I've heard that even in the senior management, that we want to keep the language, and teach the language. I've heard the education department say that, the Dhuwaya language, I heard that just recently, a couple of times.

### **6. What interpreting and translating services are available in your local languages? How useful and effective are they?**

MM: Yes, we have that. I've seen that in court too, we have interpreting in the court system. And I think broadly, when you see it, I think translating and interpreting is any work. We need to translate for doctors or other Ŋapaki (non-Indigenous people), visiting the community, we need to interpret, because not many Yolŋu understand the Ŋapaki, so it's good to have that. All Yolŋu, right across the whole of the NT, we need to be able to have interpreting, because we speak in our languages more, and English is a second language. We ask each other questions in Yolŋu languages. It (interpreting) is effective; when my father was sick, and I had to translate for my family, and I had to get the right words. They had to hear, even though a couple of times I had to translate in Yolŋu Matha, "this is what's happening to Dad."

### **7. What are the main difficulties facing your project?**

MM: With my project, I'm a full time employee, and the workload makes it difficult to be able to do the Scriptures. I haven't had the time, and my work is very hard. The only time, is in my spare time, that's how it is with the project. Also I find it difficult because there aren't enough Yolŋu, I want to be able to translate together, and be like a team.

DW: It's hard sometimes, I really want someone to be with me. There are words in Djambarrpuyŋu that I don't know. Words that aren't spoken here. Sometimes I want to ask somebody that knows that language, and I don't have the phone for Maratja, Mätjarra, all those people yet. Also, sometimes there are problems with my computer.

DW: I really want other Yolŋu to support, other people to help do the work, because sometimes we are dragged off by our families, you know, other things. We leave the Djäma (work) until we are free, we come back. Otherwise, I love doing

the wording from Djambarpuyŋu into Dhuwaya, the big words I leave it, until I can ask some other Yolŋu, Yurranydjil or Dhipiliŋa, otherwise I like it.

**8. What are you aiming to achieve in the future?**

DW: I want that book to be finished. You know, I want it to be finished. Because from Djambarrpuyŋu to Dhuwaya, in Djambarrpuyŋu there are many, many small words, I am making it short. Straight Dhäruk (language). Sometimes, when I don't get it, I look in my Bible, I read that in English, then put that in Yolŋu writing, typing.

MM: To be able to finish Mark's Gospel, just the book of Mark. I know it will take time to finish the whole Scripture, or the New Testament. In the near future, I want to be able to do that (Gospel). Time is very limited, because of my work, but I want to be able to read in my own language, in Dhay'yi, not only for me, but the whole community, especially for Dhay'yi people here in Yirrkala and in the homelands. Whether it be the whole Bible, or whether it be in a small book, you know, the stories that other children can be able to read Dhay'yi. Even the stories that have been given to the children, and to us, from our forefathers. I know that I can't do it on my own. I need a team. Within my own family, or other communities. To read, and to keep the language strong. Because I've always seen that language is important that God has given for all of us. I think that in some ways that we Yolŋu are very lucky to still have our elders living. And they have always been the backbone of the language, the backbone of all our culture. Especially our language, that we continue teaching our children and speaking, and writing is important too.

## SCRIPTURE IN USE PROJECT

Margaret Miller

CSIS-EA Scripture in Use Facilitator

Galiwin'ku, North East Arnhem Land

### **1. What are the languages spoken in your community?**

I work across the wider Yolŋu language community covering the North East Arnhem Indigenous communities of the Northern Territory, based at Galiwin'ku Elcho Island. *Yolŋu Matha* or Yolŋu languages are living languages with a rich variation from community to community. No language survey has adequately identified the complete set of varieties of Yolŋu languages, with number of speakers only as guestimates. Some suggest Yolŋu Matha speakers range from 5,000 to 7,000 and more. There are also Yolŋu speakers who are now living outside their traditional geographical borders, with many now located in Darwin. This trend is increasing due to the influences on their world, enhanced by accessibility of transport, communication and technology.

### **2. How well are they spoken by children, adults and elders?**

In the 2006 Census Yolŋu speakers were identified as the second largest Indigenous linguistic group in the Northern Territory (numbering 5 097) Yolŋu are proficient in their languages; and many adults speak at least two or more varieties of Yolŋu Matha well or very well. There is an intergenerational language shift that is occurring with younger children from smaller language groups choosing to speak their own variety of Yolŋu Matha at home but then a more prominent variety of Yolŋu Matha publically.

### **3. Describe your group and project:**

Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures began in 2008 – a project of the NRCC in UAICC and the UCA Northern Synod. My project focuses on Scripture in Use, that assists the use and development the scriptures into various formats so they be accessibility for all ages.

*Why was it important to start up?*

The primary reason to start has been to identify, develop and provide pathways to access the Scriptures in Indigenous languages. This has to be the church's responsibility and opportunity to meet the unique needs of its own church family. Not only does the 'Scripture text' need to be in an understandable and intelligible form but to have follow up with appropriate pathways for access of the text.

*How long have you been running?*

CSIS Scripture in Use began in East Arnhem in 2008

*What age group(s) are you working with?*

The workers involved are generally elders of their language group, serving all ages.

*How many people are involved?*

The North East Arnhem area involves some 12 Yolŋu Translators and another 3 Yolŋu dedicated to Scripture in Use, with two other CSIS support personnel.

### **4. What activities do you do to record or encourage the use of languages, including local languages?**

The Scripture in Use engages with resourcing and recording of language using both human and various media; paper/ cloth, audio and visual - both analogue and digital format and the internet of more recent times. Computer technology is vital to the recording of Scriptures in the Yolŋu Matha varieties in these various formats.

*How are local schools involved?*

Some support is given by the schools, with staff engaging in and supporting this project, by personnel assistance, IT support. The schools in turn receive support and encouragement in their language programs by various workers of CSIS. There lies a mutually beneficial relationship.

*What help do you receive from the government or other organisations to carry out your activities?*

The project is an initiative of the Uniting Church in Australia and has a variety of para-church organisations in partnership; e.g. Bible Society Australia, AuSIL, etc etc but significantly each language projects requires help of from within its own language group to provide volunteers and support towards its volunteers.

*Can you describe how your project's activities may have helped the whole community?*

CSIS Scriptures and Scripture in Use activities are there to benefit the whole community by way of addressing heart issues, promoting identity through the use of the Indigenous languages and the message that it carries. The project provides assistance to people emotionally, spiritually and mentally, and also provides motivation to learn to read and  
CSIS - Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures

write in one's own language and consequently that of other languages.

The then Honourable Kevin Rudd MP states in a written message to those attending the dedication of the Djambarrpuyju New Testament on the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2008;

“...This is a historic moment for Elcho Island and for many nearby communities. Throughout history, the publication of a translation of the Bible into local languages has often **been a transforming moment for local communities**. This makes it possible for people to hear and understand the Bible in the language they use everyday, giving them an understanding that is not possible when reading it in a different language.”

#### **5. How are your languages, including your local languages taught in school?**

There have been officially 3 Bilingual Schools that began in the mid-1970's that have developed a formal English / Yolŋu Matha language programs in North East Arnhem. The Two Way learning programs introduced into schools in the 1990's addresses the two other larger community schools with their Indigenous language needs. Of the 20 Indigenous Homeland schools in North East Arnhem land, schooling is primarily provided in their local language by Indigenous teaching staff who are living on site, of which 2 homelands are now part of the Northern Territory Christian Schools Association. This has created a wide range of language policies and methodologies with Indigenous languages. Government Schools are reeling from a political decision made by the NT Government in October 2008 to abandon Indigenous languages in the first 4 hours of their school day. In Yolŋu communities the elders have been resolute about the use of their own languages where language is recognised as a vital part of community life and essential in the school life of their children.

*What difference has the teaching of local languages made to children's attendance and achievement at school?*

The difference towards attendance and achievement is proven worldwide to be significant where local languages are taught. Facts are available from Brian Devlin (Charles Darwin University), who has done extensive research into this area in recent years. The use of language in the early years of Bilingual Education programs in the 1970's proved to be very successful in Indigenous education in the NT with attendance and significance in academic achievement. However with the introduction of NT Bilingual education co-inciding with many other changes to community life, it unfortunately appears that the teaching of local languages has become the scapegoat for any lack of achievement, or of children not attending school in recent decades. With Bilingual programs needing to constantly justify their existence over the many decades, to the auditors of Education, and with the slow drain of staff being removed from their positions of support in Bilingual Education in the NT, the various language programs have been wearied and overwhelmed by their skeptics. It is with credit to the vibrancy of Yolŋu languages, that Yolŋu have not given up with the value of teaching of local languages and continue to seek ways of maintaining the teaching of local languages within their schools.

If local languages are considered a given asset to community life and hence schooling, then one different question which may assist the education of the Indigenous youth in the NT would be rather to ask parents in the communities; 'why schooling'? 'For what?'

#### **6. What interpreting and translating services are available in your local languages? How useful and effective are they?**

Translators within CSIS are regularly sought out for their services in Interpreting and translating as they are some of the most trained and experienced in this field of work. For some CSIS workers that experience accumulates up to over 25 years.

#### **7. What are the main difficulties facing your project?**

Community apathy and disengagement with the workplace and its related stresses when engaging in a wider non-Indigenous world that seems to be very changeable with its authority, its policies and activities. Exhaustion reigns for those involved in translation and interpreting services who are at the coal face of cross-cultural communications between Government agencies and community. Youth are not expressing commitment towards the projects needs for workers and its future.

#### **8. What are you aiming to achieve in the future?**

Primarily to assist in the further development of CSIS; to build on our vision for healthy and robust Indigenous Scripture activity growing from yolŋu initiatives and supported by the Church and its congregations. Of course this include positive 'spin-offs' at all levels of community life with people empowerment and community self-worth.

# Glossary

**A) UCA**

Uniting Church in Australia

**B) NRCC**

Northern Regional Council of Congress

**C) UAICC**

Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress

**D) AuSIL**

Australian Society for Indigenous Languages

**E) Scripture**

This term is used in this paper to refer to the Western Canon of Scripture, composed of the Old and New Testaments, widely accepted and used by the Protestant denominations.

**F) Yolŋu**

Indigenous people of North East Arnhem Land

**G) CSIS-EA**

Referring to the branch of CSIS in northern East Arnhem Land

**H) ARDS**

Aboriginal Resource Development Service

**I) DBTP**

Djambarrpuyŋu Bible Translation Project

**J) PBTP**

Pitjantjatjara Bible Translation Project

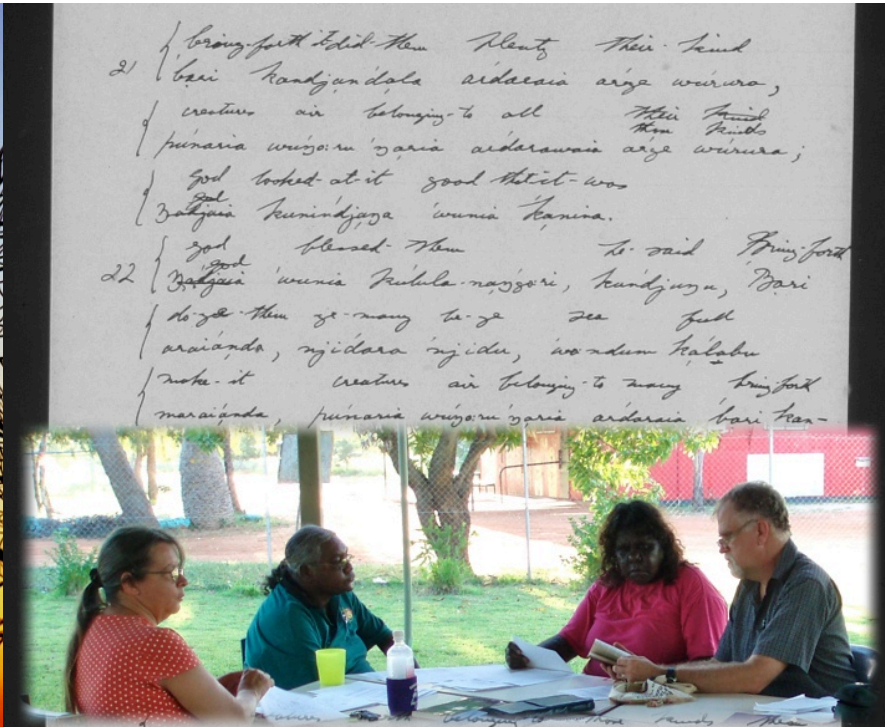
**K) Anangu**

People of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjara Lands, Central Australia

# Appendix



Boab  
(image by Garry Schlatter)



Original Draft of Genesis 1  
(Rev JRB Love)

Worrorra Workshop, 2009 (inset, L-R):  
Mary Nankivell, Joy Morlumbun,  
Barbara Bear, Howard Amery

## Readings by Remote West Kimberley Scripture Ministry

By Howard Amery, CSIS West Kimberley Project Officer

For several years now, Sunday mornings for Mary Nankivell are focussed on driving the 15 km from Derby to Mowanjum to help set up for worship, a children's activity, singing and most importantly, the morning tea afterwards. The principal components for worship are her guitar, chorus books and 'With Love To The World' (to assist with the lectionary readings for the week). These days Mary has an extra item to take with her - sufficient photocopies of the gospel reading in Worrorra and English, emailed weekly from Newcastle, NSW.

During the months of September and October this year, a diglot version of the gospel reading has been constructed on a week-by-week basis, containing the revised Worrorra text (CSIS-2010

version) of Luke's Gospel (Love-1943 version). Each verse is carefully spaced to include an intervening English translation (usually NRSV). Added to this is a very literal English 'gloss' strategically located under each Worrorra word so that readers can engage in word-for-word matching. When read by itself it does not make sense, but is used to help decode the meanings of Worrorra words.

To complete each weekly production, several questions are usually constructed. The questions focus on the meanings of particular words across the two languages, to help readers to reflect more deeply on aspects of their traditional culture, and how these might relate to the teachings of Jesus.

North East Arnhem

West Arnhem

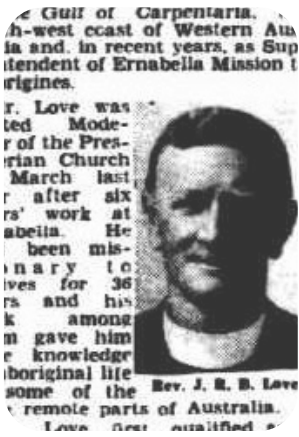
Central Australia



## around the regions



A PROJECT OF THE  
NORTHERN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF THE  
UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHRISTIAN CONGRESS,  
AND THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA NORTHERN SYNOD



past: Rev JRB Love



present: Janet Oobagooma



future: Janet's granddaughter 'Short'

by the 1980's Worrorra had become an endangered language, with choruses and hymns sung in English, and Love's translation of the Lord's Prayer recited occasionally in church services by the Mowanjum congregation. Few copies of the Gospels of Luke and Mark could be found.

CSIS is providing the people of Mowanjum with the opportunity to re-engage with their linguistic heritage. Eighteen months of dedicated work has

The idea of using a diglot approach plus matching text was first trialled during my last visit to Mowanjum in August, in an attempt to stimulate greater engagement with the Bible readings during worship. We sat in a circle of 6 people and each person was encouraged to take their turn reading a verse from the selected passage. Everyone present was a competent reader of English and so most found they could read the Worrorra words, if a little haltingly at first, along with the occasional 'tongue-twister'. As with any new skill, getting the flow and rhythm of the words takes practice, but there was obvious pleasure registered by the readers as we discussed the meaning of particular words. There was also much more interaction when it came to discussing the meaning of the passage, as they connected local stories from their own experiences and cultural traditions with those from Jesus' life.

The task of revitalising an endangered language is not one for the faint-hearted. Admittedly it is not quite as daunting as the challenge which Rev JRB Love set himself when he took up the position as Superintendent of the Kunmunya Mission in 1927. While supervising the day-to-day activities of running a remote outpost, he threw himself headlong into learning the intricate grammar, rules of interpersonal communication, kinship and traditions of the Worrorra, Wunambal and Ngarinyin peoples, culminating in the publication of Stone-Age Bushmen of Today (1936) and St Mark's Gospel (1930 ed).

Following his departure from Kunmunya in 1940, JRB Love was able to continue his involvement with Worrorra Bible translation remotely. Despite being Superintendent of the new Presbyterian mission at Ernabella SA, he was still able to find time to correspond with the British and Foreign Bible Society in Perth, correcting drafts and seeing to completion the publications of the Gospel of Luke (1943) and revised Gospel of Mark (1943). Sadly,

the Gospels of Mark and Luke active again. A sizeable lexicon of the meanings of all the words used, conforming to the new linguistic orthography (spelling system), is almost complete. Despite the presence of translation errors, a theological conversation using Rev Love's material is now possible. The willingness of congregation members to "give it a go", when reading the unfamiliar Worrorra text, was assessed over 3 separate Sundays, and encouraged me to offer them the option of '**Lectionary Readings by Remote**'. A new phase in the CSIS partnership approach has begun.

**Barre-barre gunjunganangkorri,**  
story he-told-to-them

**gajirna** always  
**dajoord** pray  
**gubajeenya,** you-pl-do-it,

**ilurra** lose interest  
**badeerri.** do-not

*Then he told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. (Luke 18:1)*

Worrorra Lectionary sample

**More information about the West Kimberley project is available online at [www.csis.org.au](http://www.csis.org.au)**



Nyälun and Marrpalawuy at the 'Our Word' workshop, Darwin, September 2010 →



# Marrpalawuy's Story

Our Word Workshop, Darwin, September

An edited interview with Marrpalawuy Marika, Yirrkala, East Arnhem  
by Hannah Harper, CSIS Resource Worker

MM: Barbara came to my house with Nyäluṅ and they were talking about a workshop in Darwin, and whether I was interested in translating my language. I said "I want to do it, but I haven't done any translation work before." Barbara (AuSIL) said, "it's alright; Nyäluṅ will help, and we will help, working with a computer." I was thinking and praying, "Lord, this is hard, and I haven't done this before..."

HH: *How did AuSIL and CSIS help you with the translation Djäma in the workshop?*

MM: It was all day, every day. We saw the other people that was there, from Goulburn Island Warruwi, Galiwin'ku people, many that I know, Guthadjaka, Yurranydjil, Goluṅ, Guywaṅa, nhanṅu gäthu, Yurranydjil nhanṅu husband (Djäwut).

HH: *So you were able to sit down with all those people?*

MM: Yes, and they kept saying, they were very pleased to see me. Yurranydjil said to me "if you find it hard translation work, all you do is pray, and we are always here to help you." And Nyäluṅ. I saw Chuck (AuSIL), and I haven't met him before.

HH: *Do you have a favourite verse of Scripture that you like to use in your ministry sitting down with Yolṅu?*

MM: Psalm 139. When God laid that in my heart, it brought tears to my eyes, that Psalm, God spoke so strongly. Even though I try to run, even though I try to hide, you know, the goodness of God, how he is. The other one, "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path", Psalm 119.

HH: *Have you heard Psalm 139 in a Yolṅu language? Psalm 119?*

MM: No. The Gospels in Djambarrpuyṅu and Gumatj.

HH: *You might be the person to help with Psalms and Revelation in Dhay'yi?!*

MM: When I think about God's words, I think of the words in Revelation, Hannah, it talks about "do not add to it, or take away from the word, or I will add the plagues..." It speaks to me too. Like a warning.

HH: *So you read that like a responsibility.*

MM: Yo... Hannah, the other story I would ask you to get from Nyäluṅ. Most of our grandchildren, they speak this language, Dhwaya, you know, at the school. And Nyäluṅ, she is doing the book of Mark in Dhwaya, that is the language spoken at Yirrkala. I just praise God for Nyäluṅ, and I'm hoping you can get the story from her too.

HH: *Yo, manymak.*

**We are hoping to print Nyäluṅ's story in January CoordN8 #5. More excerpts from Marrpalawuy's interview are printed in the 'Show' extra in this issue. For the full interview and more photos from the September workshop, visit:**

[www.csis.org.au](http://www.csis.org.au)

# Return to Warruwi

West Arnhem

By Heather Hewett

On a typical pre-wet October day in 1957, "Sheppie's" (Rev Harold Shepherdson) plane landed on the little landing strip next to the small settlement on Warruwi. I was a very excited passenger arriving to take up the position of nurse, and before long I was established in the "Sister's Cottage" with Rae Reese the teacher.

I had come to Warruwi with the desire to learn Maung and had attended Summer School of Linguistics to learn how to write down the sound system and grammar of a language. This was very helpful to me. During my time as a nurse (1957-66) it was a great joy, in off-duty time, to go fishing and food gathering with the ladies and to sit with them while they were making baskets. M. Sagiba, Ngawalun, Miriam Kris, Mondalmi, Meiyawaidba and other ladies all happily helped me to learn to speak Maung.

In 1966 I was set aside to work on the language and to begin bible translation. Philip Ambidjambidj, Peggy Mirwuma, M. Sagiba, and Nita Garidjalalug all worked with me in linguistic and translation work during that time.

In 1975 I married Ray Hewett and continued to work in linguistics and translation until 1979 when Ray and I left Warruwi and settled in Western Australia. After Ray's death I moved to Horsham, Victoria, and settled into life in the local church and community.

Then, quite unexpectedly, in January 2009 I received a letter from Rev Lindsay Parkhill, Frontier Services Patrol Officer Western Arnhem Land. Rosemary Urabadi and Nancy Nganmindjalmag were working on bible translation. Would I like to take part as a back translator (into English)? I was very happy and got in touch with Lindsay to say, "Yes!"

Since then I have been able to visit Warruwi again. It just seemed like a wonderful dream to land on the modern bituminized airport, to meet up with those who were waiting and greet friends I hadn't seen for many years. We drove into the community where there is lovely new store and craft centre and clinic. On Sunday evening we gathered together in the church and again it was wonderful to meet up with others I had known in the past. **(continued on p4)**



Peggy Mirwuma & Heather  
SIL Berrimah, circa 1968



Nancy, Rosemary, Heather  
& assistants, Warruwi, 2010

**YES...****I want to support  
Indigenous Scripture  
work...**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

 For \$20, I would like to  
become a CSIS **Partner**, (12 mths). Please register my Small Group /  
Church as a CSIS **Partner** (12 mths): \$50 Small Group  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$150 Church  
\_\_\_\_\_

As a CSIS **Partner**, you will receive future issues of *CoordN8*, and a free DVD featuring interviews & music. Prayer, study and worship resources are also becoming available for **Partner** churches & small groups.

 I would like to make a gift of  
\$\_\_\_\_\_ towards work in: all 4 regions West Arnhem East Arnhem West Kimberley Central Australia**METHOD OF PAYMENT** online credit card donation:  
[www.csis.org.au](http://www.csis.org.au) cheque/money order direct deposit

UCA-CSIS Partnership

BSB 065 901

Acc #10715800

please label your deposit  
with your name,

and return this slip to CSIS

(from p3) Since then I've been part of several workshops in Darwin where Nancy and Rosemary began translation of the book of Mark, and on Waruwi where Rosemary and Nancy and Sandra translated from Kunwinjku into Maung with input from Elizabeth and Annie, Kunwinjku speakers.

**"Ngapi ngamin marmarr mira ta ngamurnanganinyka  
ngatjama ngatjirtiki God nuyu ja jurra."**

**"I am very happy that I've come back (and that) we are helping  
each other (as) we work on God's Word."**

Heather Hewett

## Yolŋu Audio on Saber

### North East Arnhem

By Margaret Miller

Music is a wonderful vehicle to carry a message, and equally so in Scripture in Use work with our Yolŋu Scriptures audio productions. Yolŋu Christian music abounds, old and new, and is a wonderful means of promoting the use of God's word.

This year Margaret and Wängarr have been beavering away at making available old favourite cassettes as CDs. We now hold over a dozen 'Christian Scripture Programs with music' in CD format, that are shaping up with their CD labels and covers.

Margaret is digitising another dozen 'old and well-loved' Yolŋu Christian music cassette programs that have been produced in earlier times, whilst Wängarr is capturing new music digitally around the community and at fellowship evenings.

As we grow our range of music digitally, there will also be much to explore in promoting God's Word with those recordings through CDs, mp3's, mobile phones or whatever... Here is Yurranydjil holding a Saber, a robust mp3 player suitable to go anywhere, especially to remote places without 24/7 electricity, such as 'homelands' and the outdoors. Some of these Sabers have been provided by the Bible Society. Sabers are now available for purchase, fully programmed, through CSIS-EA. This is a great development in Scripture use.



#### The Yolŋu SABER holds 1GB of data, including:

- 143 Christian songs sung by Yolŋu
- A Bible Overview (Gumatj)
- James (Gumatj)
- Luke (ch 3-9) (Djambarrpuyŋu)
- Ephesians (Djambarrpuyŋu)
- A variety of individual Scripture verses (Djambarrpuyŋu)
- a 'taste' of some new Scripture portions (Wangurri)

#### Yolŋu languages represented:

Gumatj, Djambarrpuyŋu, Gälpu, Wangurri, Gupapuyŋu, Golumala, Liyagawumirr, Warramiri, Datuwuy

**Profiles of the  
CSIS-EA  
Scripture-in-  
Use workers  
are online →**

*Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures*

PO Box 38221, Winnellie, NT, 0821

(08) 8982 3400

[www.csis.org.au](http://www.csis.org.au) • [info@csis.org.au](mailto:info@csis.org.au)