



Indigenous languages in remote communities

Canberra Public Hearing 12:15pm

Thursday 3 November

Dr Bill Fogarty and Dr Inge Kral will give evidence to a parliamentary Committee inquiring into language learning in Indigenous communities. Dr Kral and Dr Fogarty will share with the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs their combined 30 years of experience working as educators and researchers in remote Indigenous communities.

In their submission to the Committee's inquiry, Dr Fogarty discusses the vital role of Indigenous languages in Indigenous land and sea management in remote Australia. He notes that this development activity depends "directly on the continued strength and availability of Indigenous language" because languages are a repository for Indigenous ecological knowledge. Dr Fogarty talks about the positive benefits for language learning, literacy and numeracy when Indigenous education programs engage with participatory development of this kind.

Dr Kral discusses the out-of-school language and literacy needs of Indigenous adolescents and young adults, with a focus on the digital economy. She says that it is "imperative that language and literacy support is provided for youth in non-formal or out-of-school contexts to improve their oral and written Indigenous language and English competence". Dr Kral is concerned that the coming Digital TV switch-over will endanger the future of Indigenous Community Television, which plays an important role in language and cultural revival, maintenance and transmission in remote contexts.

Dr Kral and Dr Fogarty state that "there is no evidence that learning in an Indigenous first language has a negative effect on English language acquisition", or "that 'English only' remote schools perform better than bilingual schools". They suggest that "the evidence of the benefits of Indigenous language programs for Indigenous students overwhelmingly supports their continuation and development".

The hearing will be broadcast live from Committee Room 1R2, Parliament House, Canberra from approximately 12:15pm on Thursday 3 November:

<http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>

Information about the inquiry can be found at the inquiry's website:

www.aph.gov.au/languages

For media comment, please contact the Committee Chair Mr Shayne Neumann on (07) 3201 5300.

For background information, contact the Committee Secretariat on (02) 62774559 or atsia.reps@aph.gov.au