OUR LAND OUR LANGUAGES

Language Learning in Indigenous Communities

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Our Land
Our Languages

Language Learning in Indigenous Communities

House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

September 2012
Canberra

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REPORT

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Foreword

Language work is close to the heart of many Indigenous Australians. The important role that Indigenous languages play in terms of a connection to culture, kinship, land and family was highlighted during the Committee's inquiry, as was the devastation to communities that results when language is lost. Indigenous languages are the foundation upon which the capacity to learn, interact and to shape identity is built.

The dedication and passion of people involved in Indigenous languages projects in urban, regional and remote locations was impressive. The Committee found there is outstanding work being undertaken across the country to maintain and revive Indigenous languages, for example:

- the Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre has developed the Miromaa computer program, a database that enables the gathering, organising, analysis and production of language materials to aid in language education and training

- the Papulu Appar-kari Language Corporation, based in Tenant Creek, supports 16 language groups in the Barkley Region through a range of activities and resources

- the Mabu Yawaru Ngan-ga language centre supports the teaching of the Yawaru language in schools in the Broome area

- the Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre runs a master-apprentice scheme for the learning of the Mirrawoong language in the Kununurra region

- the Gidarjil Corporation is producing booklets and teaching Dharambal language and culture to children in schools across central Queensland, and

- the Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre has developed dictionaries for about seven Indigenous languages in New South Wales.

The Mabo decision of the High Court of Australia in 1992 recognised the occupancy of the Indigenous peoples and their ongoing connection to the land. This report builds on this connection to land and recognises and celebrates the

languages of Australia's Indigenous peoples who have lived in this land for over tens of thousands of years.

The Committee has made 30 recommendations in this report in key areas such as:

- incorporating an acknowledgement and focus of Indigenous languages into the Closing the Gap framework

- expanding the Indigenous Languages Support program and prioritising the development of language nests

- establishing a national Indigenous interpreting service and putting in place immediate measures to ensure competent interpreting services in the health and justice sectors

- supporting Constitutional change to include the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages

- resourcing bilingual school education programs for Indigenous communities where the child's first language is an Indigenous language

- developing strategies for training Indigenous language teachers to ensure improved access to full qualifications, accreditation and career pathways

- compulsory English as an Additional Language or Dialect training for all teaching degrees and mandatory EAL/D and cultural awareness training for teacher working in Indigenous communities, and

- improving community access to language materials through a dedicated Indigenous languages archive at AIATSIS and the sharing of resources with schools and educational institutions.

The Committee received over 154 submissions and held 23 public hearings. I would like to express my thanks to those people who put much time into their excellent contributions to submissions and during hearings.

I take this opportunity to thank the Deputy Chair, Sharman Stone MP and all the members of the Committee for their work during the inquiry.

To all Australians I say: take pride in the Indigenous languages of our nation. Indigenous languages bring with them rich cultural heritage, knowledge and a spiritual connection to the land – *Our Land, Our Languages*.

Mr Shayne Neumann
Chair

Membership of the Committee

Chair	Mr Shayne Neumann MP
Deputy Chair	The Hon. Dr Sharman Stone MP
Members	Ms Sharon Grierson MP
	Mrs Natasha Griggs MP
	Mr Barry Haase MP
	Mr Ed Husic MP
	Mr Graham Perrett MP

Committee Secretariat

Secretary	Dr Anna Dacre
Inquiry Secretary	Ms Susan Cardell Ms Rebecca Gordon
Research Officers	Dr John White
Administrative Officers	Mrs Rebeka Mills

Terms of reference

The Committee will inquire into and report on Indigenous languages in Australia, with a particular focus on:

- The benefits of giving attention and recognition to Indigenous languages

- The contribution of Indigenous languages to Closing the Gap and strengthening Indigenous identity and culture

- The potential benefits of including Indigenous languages in early education

- Measures to improve education outcomes in those Indigenous communities where English is a second Language

- The educational and vocational benefits of ensuring English language competency amongst Indigenous communities

- Measures to improve Indigenous language interpreting and translating services

- The effectiveness of current maintenance and revitalisation programs for Indigenous languages

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

List of acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACIKE	Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledges and Education
ACTA	Australian Council of TESOL Associations
AEU	Australian Education Union
AGD	Attorney-General's Department
AHED	Arnhem Human Enterprise Development
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
AIICS	Aboriginal and Islander Independent Community School
AISSA	Association of Independent Schools South Australia
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ALNF	Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation
ALRRC	Aboriginal Languages Research and Resource Centre
ANTaR	Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation
ARDS	Aboriginal Resource and Development Services
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
ATSILS	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services

AuSIL   Australian Society for Indigenous Languages

AVA   Audiovisual Archive

BIITE   Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

CAAMA   The Central Australian Indigenous Media Association

CALCD   Centre for Aboriginal Languages Coordination and Development

CDU   Charles Darwin University

CITIES   Centre for Indigenous Technology Information and Engineering Solutions

COAG   Council of Australian Governments

DEET   Department of Employment, Education and Training

DEEWR   Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

DET   Department of Education and Training

DGR   Deductible Gift Recipient

DHS   Department of Human Services

DRIL   Documenting and Revitalising Indigenous Languages

EAL/D   English as an Additional Language or Dialect

ELA   Evaluation of Literacy Approach

ESALG   Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group

ESL   English as a Second Language

FaHCSIA   Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

FATSILC   Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and Culture

HIPPY   Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters

IAAC   Indigenous Advisory Affairs Council

ICTV	Indigenous Community Television
IEOs	Indigenous Engagement Officers
IRCA	Indigenous Remote Communications Association
ILS	Indigenous Languages Support
KIS	Kimberley Interpreting Services
KLRC	Kimberley Language Resource Centre
LOTE	Languages Other Than English
MALCC	Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs
MILR	Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records
MRALC	Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre
NAAJA	North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency
NAATI	National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters
NALP	National Aboriginal Languages Project
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NATSISS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
NBN	National Broadband Network
NILS	National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005
NILS2	Second National Indigenous Languages Survey
NIRA	National Indigenous Reform Agreement
NIRS	National Indigenous Radio Service
NITV	National Indigenous Television
NT AIS	Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service

NTCF	Northern Territory Curriculum Framework
NT NP	Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement
OFTA	Office for the Arts
PBI	Public Benevolent Institution
RATE	Remote Area Teacher Education
RNLD	Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity
ROCO	Register of Cultural Organisations
RSD NP	Remote Service Delivery National Partnership
SACCS	South Australia Commission for Catholic Schools
SAE	Standard Australian English
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
SCSEEC	Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood
TAC	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre
TIS	Translating and Interpreting Service
TSRA	Torres Strait Regional Authority
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WA	Western Australia
VACL	Victorian Aboriginal Centre for Languages
VET	Vocational Education and Training

List of recommendations

2 The role of Indigenous languages

Recommendation 1 - Closing the Gap framework

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government include in the Closing the Gap framework acknowledgement of the fundamental role and importance of Indigenous languages in preserving heritage and improving outcomes for Indigenous peoples.

Recommendation 2 - Signage in Indigenous languages

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government include in the National Indigenous Languages Policy 2009 a commitment to support and progress signage of place names and landmarks in local Indigenous languages.

Recommendation 3 – Parliamentary recognition of Indigenous languages

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Parliament demonstrate leadership in the recognition and valuing of Indigenous languages by:

- considering how to incorporate Indigenous languages in the Parliament House building and in the operations of the Parliament, and

- encouraging all Members of Parliament to:

    ⇒ be aware of and recognise the Indigenous language groups local to their electorate

    ⇒ where, possible and appropriate, acknowledge traditional owners and utilise language names for places and landmarks, and

    ⇒ support schools and community groups in their area to recognise, value and where possible utilise Indigenous language names.

3   Indigenous languages policy

Recommendation 4 - Languages policy action plan

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government review and make publically available by March 2013 an updated action plan with clear goals, accountability and reporting requirements to implement its National Indigenous Languages Policy. The Committee further recommends that relevant Commonwealth Government agencies are required to report annually on outcomes of the action plan.

Recommendation 5 - Increased funding for Indigenous Languages Support

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government substantially increase ongoing funding for the Indigenous Languages Support program in the 2013-14 Budget.

Recommendation 6 - Torres Strait Islander funding eligibility

The Committee recommends that the Minister for the Arts amend the guidelines for the Indigenous Languages Support program to allow Torres Strait Islander applications to be considered for funding.

Recommendation 7 - Deductible Gift Recipient eligibility

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government immediately amend the criteria for an organisation to be entered on the Register of Cultural Organisations to include a provision for Indigenous language-related projects to be endorsed as a Deductable Gift Recipient by the Australian Taxation Office.

Recommendation 8 - Constitutional recognition of Indigenous languages

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government support Constitutional changes to include the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, as recommended by the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition for Indigenous Australians.

Recommendation 9 - United Nations declaration implementation plan

The Committee recommends that by March 2013 the Commonwealth Government develop and announce an implementation plan given its endorsement of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2009.

Recommendation 10 - Convention ratification review

The Committee recommends that, given Australia has not yet ratified the Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Commonwealth Government conduct a review of the potential benefits and implications of its ratification.

4   Learning Indigenous languages and Standard Australian English

Recommendation 11 - Indigenous language learning in school

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government coordinate with the states and territories to announce dates for the implementation of Phase 2 of the Australian Curriculum.

Recommendation 12 – Language Nests

The Committee recommends that the Office for the Arts, through the Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) program, prioritise funding for Language Nest programs throughout Australia.

The Committee further recommends that the Commonwealth Government give consideration to establishing Language Nest programs in early childhood learning centres and preschools as set up under National Partnership Agreements.

Recommendation 13 - First language assessment

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to develop protocols for mandatory first-language assessment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering early childhood education.

Recommendation 14 – Bilingual education programs

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government work with state and territory governments to provide adequately resourced bilingual school education programs for Indigenous communities from the earliest years of learning, where the child's first language is an Indigenous language (traditional or contact).

Recommendation 15 – NAPLAN alternative assessment tool

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to develop a National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) alternative assessment tool for all students learning English as an Additional Language/Dialect.

5   Teaching Indigenous languages

Recommendation 16 - Limited authority to teach

The Committee recommends the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood and teacher training authorities to develop a national framework of flexible and accessible training for Indigenous people to gain limited authority qualifications to teach.

Recommendation 17 - Indigenous language teacher training

The Committee recommends the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to develop incentives for teacher training institutions to offer Indigenous language teacher training, such as a limited authority qualification to teach.

Recommendation 18 - Indigenous language teachers - training and career pathways

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to develop strategies for training Indigenous language teachers to improve access to qualifications, full accreditation and career pathways as well as providing school support and mentorship where required.

Recommendation 19 – Master-apprentice schemes

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to give consideration to establishing master-apprentice schemes in schools to provide in-service support for Indigenous language teachers.

Recommendation 20 - Sharing language teaching resources

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government amend the Indigenous Language Support (ILS) program funding criteria to ensure that language materials produced with ILS program support should, where practical and culturally appropriate, be available to be shared with schools and educational institutions as a teaching resource, with proper acknowledgment of its creators.

Recommendation 21 - Compulsory EAL/D training for teaching degrees

The Committee recommends the Minister for Education take to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) a proposal to include a compulsory component of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) training for all teaching degrees.

Recommendation 22 – In-service EAL/D and cultural awareness training

The Committee recommends the Minister for Education take to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) a proposal that all teachers already working in schools in Indigenous communities be required to complete in-service EAL/D and cultural awareness training as part of mandatory professional development.

6   Interpreting and translating Indigenous languages

Recommendation 23 - Protocol on the use of Indigenous interpreting services

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs expedite the release of a protocol on the use of Indigenous interpreting services for all Commonwealth Government agencies.

The Committee further recommends that the Commonwealth Government raise at Council of Australian Governments (COAG) the need for all states and territories to have similar protocols and ensure the use of competent interpreters when required.

Recommendation 24 - National Indigenous Interpreter Service

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government, in partnership with the states and territories, establish a national Indigenous interpreter service that is suitably resourced to service urban, regional and remote Australia.

Recommendation 25 –Interpreting in health and justice sectors

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government put in place immediate measures to ensure access to Indigenous interpreting services in the health and justice sectors, while a competent and comprehensive interpreting service is being developed.

Recommendation 26 - Interpreter training

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government, as part of developing the national framework for the effective supply and use of competent Indigenous language interpreters and translators, allocate resourcing to provide Indigenous interpreters with accessible training to achieve paraprofessional and professional levels.

Recommendation 27 - Accreditation funding

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government, in partnership with the state and territory governments, ensure dedicated and ongoing funding to the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) for Indigenous language interpreter accreditation to paraprofessional and professional level.

7   Preserving languages for future generations

Recommendation 28 – Dedicated Indigenous language archive

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government include in the 2013-14 Budget increased resources for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to carry out the storage and digitisation of Indigenous language materials.

Recommendation 29 – AIATSIS research funding

The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government consult with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to determine an appropriate and sustainable funding model in order for it to recommence its research grants program in the 2013-14 Budget.

Recommendation 30 – Archiving of ILS language material

The Committee recommends that the Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) program funding guidelines be amended to include a stipulation that a copy of any language materials developed by ILS funding recipients must be deposited with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' Library or Audio-Visual Archive.

1

Introduction

1.1 The Mabo decision of the High Court of Australia on 3 June 1992 legally recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a special relationship to the land that existed prior to colonisation. The Mabo decision recognised that 'terra nullius', the concept that Australia was unoccupied at the time of colonisation, is a fiction.

1.2 Similarly, the notion that Australia is a monolingual nation and that only Standard Australian English can benefit a person is a fiction. Estimates show that at the time of colonisation there was an estimated 250 Australian Indigenous languages being used and today there are about 18 languages, strong in the sense of being spoken by significant numbers of people across all age groups.

1.3 This report recognises and celebrates the languages of Australia's Indigenous peoples who were the original owners of this land for tens of thousands of years.

1.4 Across Australia, there has been a groundswell of activity in the area of language maintenance and revitalisation. The Committee was impressed by the dedication and passion of people involved in Indigenous languages projects in urban, regional and remote locations.

1.5 Language work is close to the heart of many Indigenous Australians. The important role that language plays in terms of understanding and transmitting culture and reinforcing the ties between kinship, country and family was highlighted, as was the devastation to communities that results when language is lost.

1.6 A key understanding emerging and profoundly informing this report is that Indigenous language is inseparable from culture, and is the foundation upon which the capacity to learn and interact productively with other people is built. In the Committee's 2011 report into the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system,

Doing Time - Time for Doing, Indigenous language was identified as an important component of cultural connection, strengthened intergenerational relationships and community building. Many people referred to Indigenous languages including traditional, contact or creole languages, as playing a significant role in the wellbeing of young Indigenous people.

1.7   The Committee sees the benefits of greater recognition of Indigenous languages as having a positive impact on slowing the rapid decline of Indigenous languages, improving self-esteem and identity for Indigenous Australians, assisting in all areas of Closing the Gap on Indigenous disadvantage and improving reconciliation outcomes for all Australians.

1.8   The Committee found that the use of languages, including Indigenous languages and Standard Australian English, can assist in improving education, vocational and economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. According to Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2011 data, 16.6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island language speakers report that they do not speak English well or at all.[1]

1.9   Throughout this report the use of the word 'Indigenous' respectfully refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.

Conduct of the inquiry

1.10   During the Committee's previous inquiry into Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system, language was identified as an important component of cultural connection, strengthening intergenerational relationships and community building. Many people referred to competency in and recognition of Indigenous language as playing a significant role in the wellbeing of young Indigenous people.

1.11   The Committee Chair approached appropriate Ministers for terms of reference for an inquiry into Indigenous languages. On 5 July 2011 the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Minister for the Arts jointly referred the inquiry.

1.12   The Committee was asked to inquire into and report on Indigenous languages in Australia, with a particular focus on:

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1   Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing,* 2011, <www.agencysearch.australia.gov.au/search/search.cgi?collection=agencies&form=simple& profile=abs&query=census of population and housing 2011> accessed 12 September 2012.

- the benefits of giving attention and recognition to Indigenous languages

- the contribution of Indigenous languages to Closing the Gap and strengthening Indigenous identity and culture

- the potential benefits of including Indigenous languages in early education

- measures to improve education outcomes in those Indigenous communities where English is a second language

- the educational and vocational benefits of ensuring English language competency amongst Indigenous communities

- measures to improve Indigenous language interpreting and translating services

- the effectiveness of current maintenance and revitalisation programs for Indigenous languages, and

- the effectiveness of the Commonwealth Government Indigenous languages policy in delivering its objectives, and relevant policies of other Australian governments.

1.13   The Committee invited submissions from interested organisations and individuals. The Committee sought responses to a questionnaire. The questionnaire aimed to find out about specific language projects in communities across Australia and was intended to be used as a guide for people to make a submission to the inquiry who might not normally do so.

1.14   The Committee received 154 submissions from a variety of sources, including Commonwealth, state and territory government departments, Indigenous rights' advocacy groups, Indigenous representative organisations, land councils, Indigenous media organisations, language centres, linguists and a range of other academics, and many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and individuals. A list of submissions received by the Committee is at Appendix A.

1.15   The Committee conducted 23 public hearings in Canberra, Newcastle, Brisbane, Sydney, Adelaide, Utopia Homelands, Alice Springs, Broome, Halls Creek and Darwin, as well as teleconferences with witnesses in Arnhem Land, the Pilbara, the Kimberley region, Innisfail, Perth, Victoria and Tasmania. A list of public hearings is at Appendix B.

1.16   In travelling to a variety of locations, such as Newcastle, Utopia Homelands and Halls Creek, the Committee heard Indigenous languages in daily use and recognised their place in Indigenous culture.

1.17   Submissions received and transcripts of evidence can be found on the
        Committee's website: http://www.aph.gov.au/languages

1.18   The Committee was given a number of children's books, flashcards,
        DVDs, posters and other material displaying the richness of Indigenous
        languages and how language is being taught to our young people. The
        Committee thanks those that provided examples of the many language
        resources being developed around Australia.

Structure of the report

1.19   Chapter 2 examines the evidence the Committee received from Indigenous
        Australians about what their languages mean to them. It discusses the link
        between language and culture, and how that shapes people's sense of
        identity. The chapter discusses the cultural knowledge, kinship and
        ancestral stories which are embedded in Indigenous languages, and are
        transferred from one generation to the next through those languages. The
        chapter discusses the value of promoting Indigenous languages as a vital
        part of Australia's living cultural heritage and how a greater recognition
        of and support for Indigenous languages can help to Close the Gap on
        Indigenous disadvantage.

1.20   Chapter 3 examines the policy context for Indigenous languages in
        Australia, including the limited support those languages have received
        from Australian governments in the past. The chapter discusses the
        current National Indigenous Languages Policy, the policies of the states
        and territories, and the sources of funding that are available to support the
        range of activities that are being undertaken to maintain and revive
        Indigenous languages. The chapter discusses proposals to recognise
        Indigenous languages in the Australian Constitution, and international
        human rights instruments that have relevance to Australian Indigenous
        languages policy.

1.21   Chapter 4 examines the value of commencing education in a child's first
        language and or incorporating some elements of Indigenous language,
        with an emphasis on the partnerships that can be strengthened by
        incorporating Indigenous languages in schools. The chapter discusses a
        range of issues that were raised during the inquiry, including school
        attendance, student and community engagement in education, the benefits
        of language nests, bilingual education, strategies to improve Standard
        Australian English language competency, the Australian Curriculum and
        literacy and numeracy assessments.

1.22   Chapter 5 discusses the training and qualifications required to teach Indigenous languages and the career and accreditation pathways available to Indigenous language teachers. The chapter discusses the important role of Indigenous language teachers in the classroom, especially in schools with high numbers of Indigenous students with English as an additional Language/Dialect needs, and attracting and retaining Indigenous language teachers.

1.23   Chapter 6 explores access and the provision of Indigenous interpreting and translating services across Australia, including the development of the National Framework for the effective supply and use of Indigenous language interpreters and translators, protocols on engaging Indigenous interpreting services, the proposal for a National Indigenous Interpreting Service, and the accreditation and competency training for Indigenous language interpreters.

1.24   Chapter 7 discusses enhancing networks and sharing language materials to ensure that Indigenous languages are preserved for the future, and examines best practice examples of good record keeping and the use of new technologies to document languages. The chapter examines the role of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) as the largest repository for Indigenous languages material in Australia.

2

"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

The role of Indigenous languages

2.1   The ability to communicate clearly is a key function for all people. Being able to communicate effectively in an individual's first or home language connects a person to their ethnic group and helps to shape a persons' identity.

2.2   As Australians we are aware of the particularities of our language and culture when we travel to places where language and culture differs from our own. Even when we might understand the language, for example, when travelling to England, America or New Zealand, differences in accents, phrasing and colloquial terms can reaffirm our sense of identity as Australians through the use of unique elements of Australian English and Australian culture. Often we recognise another Australian by the style of English language that is used.

2.3   In Australia, most Indigenous people identify strongly with a traditional language identity. The tribe with which they identify is a language group and in the great majority of cases, the tribal name is the language name.[1]

2.4   Cultural heritage and knowledge is passed on throughout each generation by language. Language is integral in affirming and maintaining wellbeing, self esteem and a strong sense of identity. Languages contain complex understandings of a person's culture and their connection with their land. There is a wealth of evidence that supports the positive associations of

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1   Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and Culture (FATSILC) *National Indigenous Languages Survey*, 2005, pp. 20-21.

health, education and employment outcomes as well as general wellbeing with language and culture. Indigenous languages keep people connected to culture and this strengthens feelings of pride and self worth.

2.5   It is important to emphasise that Australia is not a monolingual society. Since British settlement English has been the main language in Australia. The importance of learning and speaking English competently for all Australians is not disputed. However it is equally important for all Australians to recognise the several hundred unique Indigenous languages that were spoken for tens of thousands of years in Australia. These languages have not always received due recognition in the past.

2.6   This chapter discusses what Indigenous languages mean to Indigenous Australians. It explores the link between language and culture and how that shapes a sense of identity. Cultural knowledge, kinship, songlines and stories are reliant on language in order for these important cultural elements to be passed on from generation to generation.

2.7   The value of giving attention to and recognition of Indigenous languages for all Australians is considered. A better understanding and recognition of Indigenous languages will assist in the process of reconciliation between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians. This chapter discusses the importance of promoting Indigenous languages as a valuable and historical part of Australia's cultural heritage and considers how Indigenous languages can help to Close the Gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

2.8   Lastly, this chapter provides an overview of Indigenous languages and the current use of Indigenous Languages in Australia. The Committee understands that the inquiry's findings could play an important role in reducing the loss of Indigenous languages. This report aims to assist the Commonwealth Government in suggesting ways to promote and recognise the value for all Australians in maintaining, revitalising and reviving Indigenous languages throughout Australia.

Language, culture and identity

2.9   In 2012, the United Nations held a forum on 'The Study on the role of languages and culture in the promotion and protection of the rights and identity of indigenous peoples'. The importance of language is summed up in the following quote:

> Language is an essential part of, and intrinsically linked to, indigenous peoples' ways of life, culture and identities. Languages

> embody many indigenous values and concepts and contain indigenous peoples' histories and development. They are fundamental markers of indigenous peoples' distinctiveness and cohesiveness as peoples.[2]

2.10   A large volume of evidence received by the Committee throughout the inquiry reiterated the inextricable link between language, culture and identity. The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples commented in its submission that:

> Language is central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. The two are intertwined. Language describes cultural attachment to place, cultural heritage items, and puts meaning within the many cultural activities that people do. Furthermore, language plays a fundamental part in binding communities together as a culture, and individuals to each other in a society. Wesley Enoch, Director of the Queensland Theatre Company and a Nunukul Nuggi man, has said that "the loss of language is the loss of the ability to describe the landscape… and your place in it."[3]

2.11   As noted by Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) in its submission 'In the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, traditional languages provide speakers with a connection to their culture and their past, and a sense of identity and belonging.'[4]

2.12   The Committee held public hearings in various locations throughout Australia (see Appendix A) and received evidence from many Indigenous people. Indigenous Australians know what their language means to them. However, many non Indigenous Australians may not have considered the critical importance of language to a persons' identity, sense of belonging and cultural connection. The following quotations summarise the many voices the Committee heard about language and Indigenous identity.

2.13   In a submission from the Teachers and Students of Cert III in Learning Endangered Aboriginal Language, Murray Bridge TAFE, South Australia, it stated that 'our language helps us with our identity and our culture, and

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2   United Nations General Assembly paper, fifth session, *Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Study on the role of languages and culture in the promotion and protection of the rights and identity of indigenous peoples*, 2012, p. 8.

3   The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, *Submission 139*, p. 2.

4   ANTaR, *Submission 23*, p. 3.

helps us work out where we fit in society, for example who we are related to.'[5]

2.14   At a public hearing in Alice Springs, Ms Amelia Turner, speaking on behalf of the Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation, described how languages connected her to the land, her ancestors and her community:

> Our language is sacred to us. Every Aboriginal language is sacred for those who speak it. Words are given to us by the land and those words are sacred. What does it mean to an Aboriginal culture? The land needs words, the land speaks for us and we use the language for this. Words make things happen—make us alive. Words come not only from our land but also from our ancestors. Knowledge comes from Akerre, my own language and sacred language.
>
> Language is ownership; language is used to talk about the land. Language is what we see in people. Language is what we know of people—we know of him or her. If they speak my sacred language, I must be related to their kinships. Language is how people identify themselves. Being you is to know your language. It is rooted in your relationship from creation—in your kinship that cycles from then and there, onwards and onwards. It is like that root from the tree.
>
> Language is a community—a group of people. Not only do you speak that language but generations upon generations of your families have also spoken it. The language recognises and identifies you, who you are and what is you. Sacred language does have its own language. You can claim other languages through your four grandparents. Know your own language first before you learn other languages—to know it, to understand it and also to relate to it.[6]

2.15   Mr Lance Box from the Yipirinya School Council made the following statement in relation to the interrelated nature of land, law, language, kinship and ceremony:

> In the Warlpiri, we have a word called ngurra-kurlu, which is a term that speaks of the interrelatedness of five essential elements: land, law, language, kinship and ceremony. You cannot isolate any

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5   Teachers and Students of Cert III in Learning Endangered Aboriginal Language, Murray Bridge TAFE, South Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 2.

6   A Turner, Artepe Aboriginal Corporation, *Committee Hansard*, Alice Springs, 4 April 2012, p. 13.

of these elements. All of those elements hang together. If you take people away from country, they cannot conduct ceremony, and if they do not conduct ceremony, they cannot teach strong language. Ceremony is the cradle to grave, a delivery place for education for Indigenous people. If you do not have ceremony and you do not have language, then your kinship breaks down. Then law breaks down and the whole thing falls apart.[7]

2.16   A submission received from people living in the Victoria River District in the Northern Territory described the benefits in passing on knowledge and culture through traditional Gurindji language:

> We have been recording old people telling Dreaming stories and stories about the old days, for example when Gurindji people used to work at Jinparrak (Wave Hill station). We have also recorded the Gurindji way of life, for example collecting bush tucker such as kilipi 'bush bananas', kurlartarti 'bush oranges', kurtakarla 'bush coconuts', muying 'black plums' and wayita 'bush yams', and medicine such as kupuwupu 'lemon grass', manyanyi 'medicine plant' and lunyja 'snappy gum'.[8]

2.17   Mr Ross Williams, of the Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation based in Tennant Creek commented 'If you do not know your language, you do not know your country and you do not know your Dreaming. You have got to follow lines and you keep in line with the older people.'[9]

2.18   The Walpiri Patu Kurlangu Jaru submission explained the following about the importance of language:

> Knowing that our own language and culture play the biggest role in growing our spirit, our connection to our land and the stories of our grandmother and grandfathers. With our language we know where we belong, we know the names from our country and Jukurrpa (Dreaming stories and designs). Young people can't lead a good, healthy and happy life without this. Language and culture come first. When kids feel lost and their spirit is weak then they can't learn well or be healthy. They need to feel pride in their language and culture and know that they are respected. That's the only way to start closing the gap.[10]

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7   L Box, Yipirinya School Council, *Committee Hansard*, Alice Springs, 4 April 2012, pp. 24-5.

8   C Edwards and F Meakins, *Submission 4a*, p. 2.

9   R Williams, Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation, *Committee Hansard*, Alice Springs, 4 April 2012, p. 34.

10   Walpiri Patu Kurlangu Jaru, *Submission 121*, p. 6.

2.19   The Indigenous Remote Communications Association (IRCA) viewed
         maintenance and support for Indigenous languages as fundamental to
         strengthening Indigenous identity and culture.[11] Diagram 1 from the
         IRCA demonstrates the interconnectedness of language with culture,
         family, country and kinship for Indigenous Australians.

Diagram 2.1   **Diagrammatic Interpretation of the Inter-connectedness of Language
                (Diagram by Lionel James)**
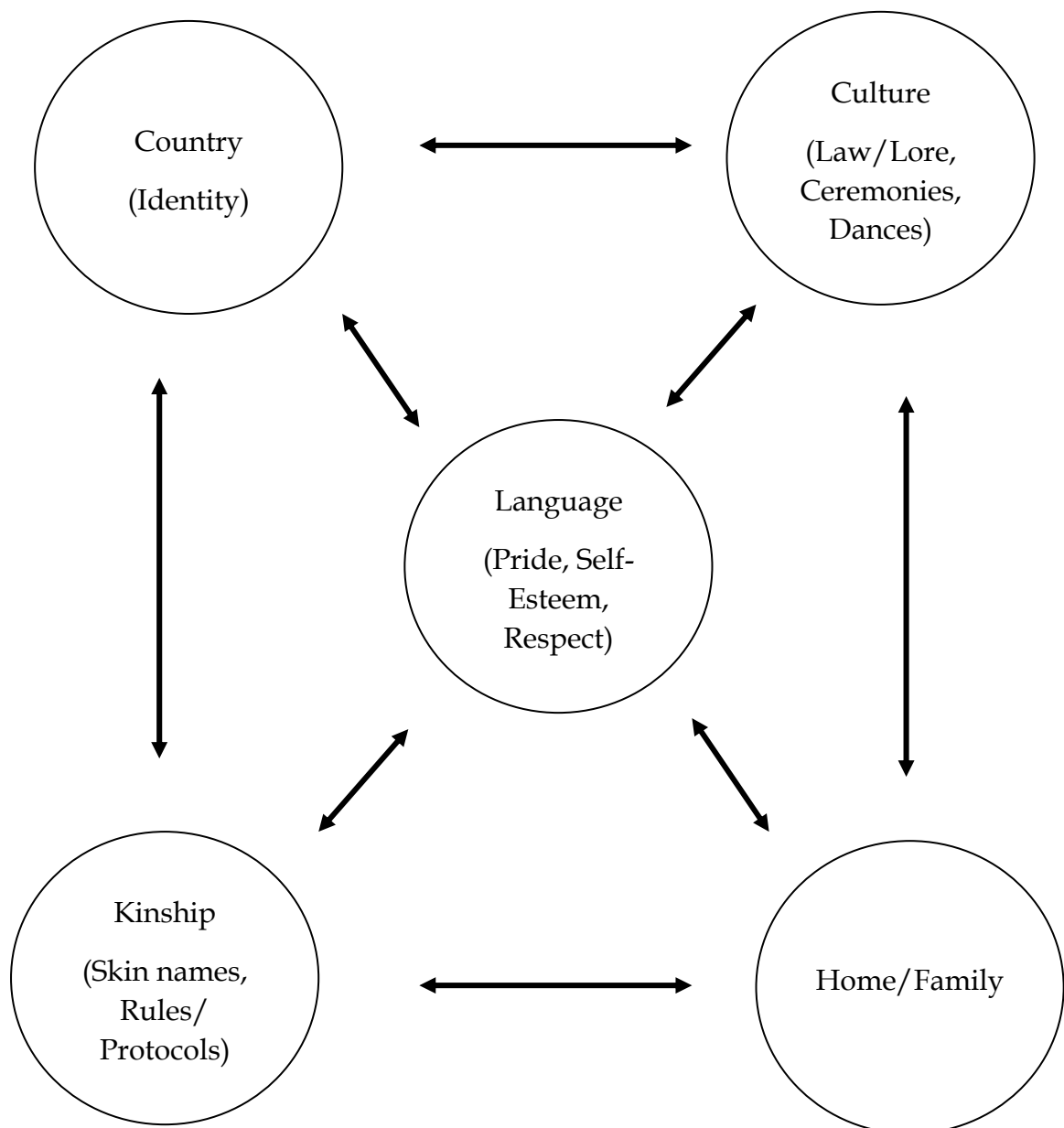
11   IRCA, *Submission 68*, p. 7.

Benefits of giving attention to Indigenous languages

2.20   Central to the idea of giving attention and recognition to Indigenous
        languages is that it will strengthen Indigenous culture and identity which
        will lead to improvements in Standard Australian English competency
        and socio-economic factors including improved measurements of
        wellbeing.

2.21   In its submission, the Commonwealth Office of the Arts commented that:

> although there have been no Australian studies completed to date
> that could demonstrate causal links between Indigenous language
> use and other outcomes, and whilst the findings of cross-sectional
> studies should be interpreted with care, the research ...supports
> the hypothesis and community view that future generations of
> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples could substantially
> benefit from efforts and policies enacted now to maintain
> Indigenous languages.[12]

2.22   Analysis of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social
        Survey (NATSISS) data shows positive associations between language use,
        wellbeing and socio-economic variables:

■ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who speak Indigenous
   languages have markedly better physical and mental health; are more
   likely to be employed; and are less likely to abuse alcohol or be charged
   by the police

■ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 13-17 year olds in urban and
   regional areas are substantially more likely to attend school if they
   speak an Indigenous language

■ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who speak, understand or
   learn an Indigenous language are more likely to gain a post-school
   qualification, and

■ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in remote areas who
   speak an Indigenous language are less likely to engage in high risk
   alcohol consumption and illicit substance use, and to have been a victim
   of physical or threatened violence.[13]

2.23   Trevor Stockley reiterated similar comments at a public hearing by stating:

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12   The Office for the Arts, *Submission 127*, p. 2.
13   The Office for the Arts, *Submission 127*, p. 2.

> The process of re-awakening and revitalising those languages, which are no longer spoken or remembered, is a strong tool in personal and community development. Language learners have feelings of wellbeing, self-respect, empowerment, identity, self-satisfaction and belonging when hearing and speaking their ancestral language. Showing respect to Indigenous languages and culture, learning about and using your language, will help in understanding your indigenous history and identity. It is a strong tool in that it provides many beneficial social, emotional and educational gains to people.[14]

2.24   In Adelaide the Committee heard from an ex-principal, Alitya Rigney, of the Kaurna Plains School. She emphasised the importance for Indigenous students to learn their home language in order to develop an enthusiasm for learning. Dr Rigney commented:

> Have you ever seen a kid's face when they learn the language of their people and country and see the joy, the pride and the identity that comes from that and the wonder that will take them into the future? It is absolutely magic.[15]

2.25   In Darwin, Maratja Dhamarrandji commented on the importance of language as a tool for good education:

> It is really important and crucial for me as an Indigenous person for not only me and the clan that I represent and my people—the Yolngu people in north-east Arnhem Land—but the old people who want good education in their communities. It is for their cultural identity not only for me but for their Australian identity, because it is really important to see the best outcomes for our people. Education is the key for us to have a good life in our community. We have to have a good education, and language is part of the means, the tools, whereby we can have good access to education.[16]

2.26   The Committee heard from Patsy Bedford from the Kimberley Language Resource Centre (KLRC) in Halls Creek, who made the following comment about the intangible nature of language and how much it means to Indigenous Australians:

> The government does not recognise language because it is invisible. But language makes us strong. It puts something in us.

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14   T Stockley, *Submission 62*, p. 2.
15   A Rigney, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 2 April 2012, p. 2.
16   M Dhamarrandji, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 4.

> This organisation is struggling. You heard the old people talk
> about what language means to us. Once the language is taken
> away then our country and our culture are taken away. We will be
> nobody.[17]

2.27   A submission from the Northern Indigenous School Support Unit,
        Queensland summed up the benefits of Indigenous students learning their
        language in schools with the following points:

- strengthening their cultural identity

- including Indigenous aspirations in the school curriculum

- building their cultural and personal resilience

- respecting their distinctive heritage as first peoples

- making meaningful links with community, and

- promoting Reconciliation through redressing past wrongs of
  suppressing Indigenous languages.[18]

Valuing Indigenous languages for all Australians

2.28   The Committee explored the issue of valuing Indigenous languages for all
        Australians. Although it was understood that Indigenous languages are
        valuable to those who are descendants of a particular language group the
        benefits of maintaining and revitalising Indigenous languages to all
        Australians was a recurrent issue throughout the inquiry.

2.29   Trevor Stockley emphasised that from an historical perspective,
        knowledge of Indigenous languages was valuable:

> Gaining an awareness of an Indigenous language offers both
> Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians a good opportunity to
> better understand our combined history and to gain an
> understanding of Australia's Indigenous heritage of languages
> and culture. It is a positive way to help close the gap.[19]

2.30   The value of languages was discussed from the perspective of
        reconciliation numerous times throughout the inquiry. A submission from
        Reconciliation Australia highlighted this point:

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17   P Bedford, *Committee Hansard*, Halls Creek, 1 May 2012, p. 10.

18   D Angelo, *Submission 110*, p. 2.

19   T Stockley, *Submission 62*, p. 2.

> Building the recognition and appreciation of Aboriginal and
> Torres Strait Islander languages will also contribute to the national
> pride of all Australians. The concept of shared pride in the
> histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
> Australians is a key part of reconciliation in Australia.[20]

2.31   An example of positive steps using language to reduce racism in regional
         Australia was provided to the Committee by Tonya Stebbins:

> Insofar as Closing the Gap involves changing non Aboriginal
> people's attitudes towards Aboriginal Australians, access to
> learning an Indigenous language and learning about Indigenous
> culture is an extremely powerful means of change. Indigenous
> languages and appropriate aspects of Indigenous culture should
> gradually be incorporated more deeply into the whole curriculum
> for all Australian students. This is already happening in some
> communities (eg. primary schools in Parkes) and has had a very
> significant impact on levels of racism within these schools.
> Whenever the opportunity is available, this type of activity should
> be supported.[21]

2.32   Ms Lola Jones, a teacher trainer with the Western Australian Department
         of Education, reinforced how important introducing Indigenous language
         into the school setting is for all Australians. She commented 'There are
         really huge reconciliation benefits for non Aboriginal kids, and also just
         the understanding about the community and the country where you are
         living.'[22]

2.33   At a Brisbane public hearing this point of view was echoed by Nyoka
         Hatfield, a Dharumbal woman living in Rockhampton, who works in
         Queensland schools teaching Indigenous language and culture. She
         discussed the importance of bridging the language barrier between
         Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians:

> I believe that what I am doing is an enormous step towards
> reconciliation and Closing the Gap for the present time and for the
> future. I also believe that Indigenous language maintenance and
> revitalisation programs should be supported where ever possible,
> without these programs our Indigenous languages will slowly
> disappear. What is also very important is that Indigenous

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20   Reconciliation Australia, *Submission 115*, p. 1.
21   T Stebbins, *Submission 69*, p. 2.
22   L Jones, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 10.

languages need to be taught in schools and for it to be done in a culturally appropriate manner.

When white people first came to Australia language was a barrier between Indigenous and non Indigenous people, it was one of the causes of the disastrous relationship that developed from the very beginning, and that continues to this day. We need to turn that barrier into a language bridge by giving all Australians a chance to learn about that which belongs to their country.[23]

2.34   Incorporating Indigenous culture and language learning in schools teaches all Australians about Indigenous culture and language and develops respect within the school community. This finding was supported in evidence which commented on the reports from teachers as a result of the language and culture classes that were run in particular schools:

A common comment was that all of the children were learning to have respect for Indigenous culture and language. Other comments were that students are learning their country's history and how it has changed over the years and also about its rich Indigenous culture.[24]

2.35   The IRCA suggested that:

more Indigenous language courses would increase community awareness of Indigenous languages and there needs to be more language courses available to the public. This would increase employment (as trainers) and support reconciliation through greater cross-cultural awareness.[25]

2.36   A better understanding of Indigenous languages and culture was suggested as a way to improve the communications between non Indigenous and Indigenous Australians who are working in the area of Indigenous affairs. Trevor Stockley commented:

The communities who speak their Indigenous language as their first language need to expect other Australians to learn to appreciate and respect Aboriginal languages and aspects of history and culture within their school education and in general Australian life. Particularly those non Indigenous people living

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23   N Hatfield, *Submission 63,* pp. 5-6.

24   N Hatfield, *Submission 63,* p. 4.

25   IRCA, *Submission 68a,* p. 2.

and working within these remote communities and high status
public and political figures in Australian society.[26]

2.37   The Queensland Department of Education and Training submission
        alerted the Committee to the Department's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait
        Islander Languages Statement* which stipulated that 'Reconciliation is a key
        priority of the Queensland Government.' The Languages Statement
        continues:

> Greater understanding and shared ownership of our Aboriginal
> and Torres Strait Islander languages – traditional languages,
> creoles and related varieties – will contribute to the Australian
> identity of all students, schools and communities, and will sustain
> Queensland's unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
> linguistic and cultural heritage.[27]

2.38   Raising the profile of Indigenous languages through the use of interpreters
        for government interaction in sectors such as health, legal and education
        can be beneficial for Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians. The
        Indigenous languages are given a status through recognition and use of
        languages other than English.

2.39   International research has demonstrated that bilingualism also has
        cognitive and developmental benefits.[28] Internationally, there has been
        recognition of the value of bilingualism in preserving and valuing
        traditions, enriching individuals, and in creating modern flexible and
        tolerant societies.[29]

2.40   Indigenous media organisations such as The Central Australian
        Indigenous Media Association (CAAMA) promote Indigenous culture,
        language, dance and music while generating benefits in the form of
        training, employment and income generation. CAAMA is an excellent
        example of how Indigenous language and culture can be shared between
        Indigenous communities in a way that also informs and educates the
        wider community of the richness and diversity of Indigenous Australia.

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26   T Stockley, *Submission 62*, p. 9.
27   Queensland DET, *Submission 109*, pp. 15-16.
28   Studies reported by the United States National Academy of Sciences identified greater brain
      plasticity in bilingual infants compared with non bilingual infants at the pre-language stage.
      The studies showed that bilingual infants are far more likely to learn new responses than
      non bilingual infants. See A Kovacs and J Mehler, 'Cognitive gains in 7 month old bilingual
      infants', < www.pnas.org/content/106/16/6556.short> accessed 11 February 2012.
29   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 2003, 'Language
      Vitality and Endangerment: Document submitted to the International Expert Meeting on
      UNESCO Programme Safeguarding of Endangered Languages'
      <www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/00120-EN.pdf> accessed 11 February 2012.

2.41   Dr Nick Thieberger was supportive of this idea in his submission. He stated:

> Every language has been built up by its speaker community over time and encapsulates novel ways of thinking of the world. Recording this information gives everyone (speakers and outsiders) insights into Indigenous cultures. The value for the broader Australian society is that we will all be able to appreciate Indigenous societies in greater depth if we are able to understand more of their languages.[30]

2.42   Greg Dickson provided the Committee with the following examples to demonstrate social, cultural and economic benefits that are gained from recognising and valuing Indigenous languages. These benefits are evidenced at local community levels, regionally, nationally and internationally. The examples provide a window into what is possible when the potential of Indigenous languages is harnessed:

- Australian of the Year recipients who speak an Aboriginal language as a first language: Galarrwuy Yunupingu (1978), Mandawuy Yunupingu (1992)
- National TV shows in Indigenous languages e.g. Bush Mechanics (Warlpiri, ABC TV 2001),Women of the Sun (Yolŋu Matha/English, ABC/SBS 1981)
- Top-selling, award-winning recording artists who speak and sing in Indigenous language/s (e.g. Yothu Yindi, Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu)
- Indigenous language-speaking AFL stars: e.g. Liam Jurrah, Liam Patrick (both Warlpiri)
- Award-winning feature film Ten Canoes (2006 - Ganalbingu and other languages)
- Theatre productions, e.g. Ngapartji Ngapartji (Big hART, 2007 - Pitjantjatjara language)
- National advertising campaign (Qantas 2009 – Kala Lagaw Ya language)
- Award-winning journalism (Sydney Morning Herald, 2009 "Language is Power – Let us have ours", in English and Gumbaynggirr, received UN Media Peace award, 2010)
- Tertiary education courses e.g. Graduate Certificate in Yolngu Studies (Charles Darwin University), Certificate 1, 2 and 3 in Aboriginal Languages e.g. Gamilaraay, Gumbaynggirr (TAFE NSW)

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30   N Thieberger, *Submission 106*, p. 1.

▪ Academic writing in Indigenous languages, e.g. Bani, E. (1987), 'Garka a ipika: masculine and feminine grammatical gender in Kala Lagaw Ya', Australian Journal of Linguistics 7(2):189-201.[31]

2.43   Another excellent example of achievement is the 2012 Senior Australian of the Year Laurie Baymarrwangga, who was recognised for 'almost single-handedly nurturing the inter-generational transmission of local ecological knowledge through a lifelong commitment to caring for kin, culture and country' in the Crocodile Islands of the Northern Territory.[32]

2.44   Ms Baymarrwangga initiated the Yan-nhangu Dictionary project in 1994, and continues to pass on her language and culture through the Crocodile Islands Initiative, which includes a ranger program, a language nest and a web-based ecological knowledge base for schools. In Ms Baymarrwangga's words:

> Nhangu dhangany yuwalkthana bayngu bulanggitj Yolngu mitji marnggimana dhana gayangamana mayili mana dhangany wanggalangabu mana limalama ganatjirri wulumba (maramba)

> "We continue to pass on the stories of our land and sea country for the good of new generations".[33]

Dual naming

2.45   The benefits of dual naming were raised with the Committee during a public hearing in Adelaide. One of the main benefits was that it raised the awareness of Indigenous people and their language in localised areas in Australia. Dual naming provides recognition to Indigenous Australians as well as helping to preserve the language. Uluru (Ayres Rock) and Kata Juta (the Olgas), are well known Indigenous names for landmarks. The Committee found it was occurring at a more localised level.

2.46   Professor Amery commented there had been a lot of naming activity in Adelaide:

> In 2001 the River Torrens was officially dual named—Karrawirra Parri—with its original name. There is also, Tarndanyangga, Victoria Square. In the last couple of months the Adelaide City

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31   G Dickson, *Submission 125*, p. 2.

32   Australian of the Year Awards 2013, 'Senior Australian of the Year 2012', <www.australianoftheyear.org.au/recipients/?m=laurie-baymarrwangga-2012> accessed 30 August 2012.

33   Yan-nhangu Dictionary Team, *Submission 30*, p. 3.

Council approached Kaurna Warra Pintyandi again about dual
naming of the squares.[34]

2.47   The NILS report highlighted the importance of dual naming. The fact that
language is so important in forming Indigenous identity and people's
relationships to areas of land means that there is an intimate relationship
between language-related activities and the current emphasis on Native
Title claims and determinations. As Native Title rights are asserted and
put into practice in land management schemes, it is likely there will be
much more emphasis on a 'two-way' approach to landscape involving use
of Indigenous placenames, names for landforms, water sources, flora and
fauna and local terminology for management practices, such as use of fire
and hunting/culling.[35]

Contribution to Closing the Gap

2.48   The Committee received evidence on the contribution of Indigenous
languages to Closing the Gap and their interconnectedness with
strengthening Indigenous culture and identity. The Closing the Gap
strategy identifies the commitment to targets to reduce Indigenous
disadvantage and lists the associated building blocks for action.[36]

2.49   The Australian Education Union (AEU) suggested that integrating
Indigenous languages policy into Council of Australian Government
(COAG) Closing the Gap targets could be a way to ensure that programs
are appropriately targeted and funded.[37]

2.50   Ms Jacqueline Phillips from ANTaR referred to a lack of focus on the
importance of Indigenous languages as one of the missing pieces in the
Closing the Gap puzzle.[38]

2.51   The National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) acknowledges that
culture must be recognised in actions intended to overcome Indigenous
disadvantage:

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34   R Amery, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 2 April 2012, p. 5.

35   AIATSIS and FATSILC, *National Indigenous Languages Survey*, 2005, p. 21.

36   Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA),
'Closing the Gap: The Indigenous Reform Agenda' <www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-
responsibilities/indigenous-australians/programs-services/closing-the-gap> accessed
30 August 2012.

37   AEU, *Submission 88*, p. 7.

38   J Phillips, ANTaR, *Committee Hansard*, 18 November 2011, p. 9.

> Pride in culture plays a vital role in shaping people's aspirations and choices. Efforts to Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage must recognise and build on the strength of Indigenous cultures and identities.[39]

2.52   The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda commented that 'It is my view that investment in preserving and teaching Indigenous languages will assist in achieving the Closing the Gap targets.'[40]

2.53   The Australian Society for Indigenous Languages (AuSIL) commented:

> Decades of research and experience show that meaningful recognition of indigenous languages, along with their deliberate and systematic incorporation into programs in the education, health, justice, and job training sectors, along with reasonable cross-cultural training and orientation of service providers are critical to Closing the Gap. The evidence consistently indicates that doing so gives significantly better outcomes in:
>
> ■ literacy
> ■ Standard English proficiency
> ■ school retention rates
> ■ learning in all subjects
> ■ reduction in antisocial behaviour, and
> ■ as well as progress towards achieving the Millenium Development Goals.
>
> Not doing so will continue to contribute to low levels of performance in all these sectors, and seriously impede the goals of Closing the Gap.'[41]

2.54   Why Warriors Pty Ltd and the Arnhem Human Enterprise Development (AHED) project echoed the above statements:

> We see that valuing and supporting the use of Indigenous languages is vital to "closing the gap" – and indeed, that the gap will not otherwise ever be closed. We see the valuing Indigenous languages has enormous impacts on health outcomes – and all areas of life for Aboriginal communities – governance, social cohesion, economics and a sense of empowerment to control their own future.

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39   FaHCSIA, *Submission 141*, p. 3.
40   Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 31*, p. 1.
41   Australian Society for Indigenous Languages, *Submission 60*, p. 1.

> ... our practice in the use of these Yolngu languages has shown
> that there can be effective education and dialogue, a deep sharing
> of knowledge and intellectual discussion in the areas of
> governance, land rights, health/chronic diseases and economics.[42]

2.55   The Indigenous Remote Communications Association emphasised the
point that Closing the Gap cannot be achieved in isolation of the
nominated targets.

2.56   They noted that 'these building blocks are linked – achieving the Closing
the Gap targets requires progress in each of these areas. Strategies aimed
at achieving improvements in any one area will not work in isolation.
Language maintenance, language media production and language
curriculum development are obvious links across these targets that will
result in improvements across these action areas.'[43]

2.57   During a public hearing in Halls Creek, Ms Patsy Bedford, a member from
the Kimberley Language Resource Centre (KLRC) told the Committee that
the KLRC had included language and culture as an eighth building block
in the Closing the Gap strategy for Western Australia.[44]

2.58   In Darwin the Committee heard from Minister McCarthy about the work
the Northern Territory is doing with COAG. In relation to including
language and culture as part of the building blocks in the local
implementation plans it was stressed that this was happening. Minister
McCarthy commented:

> There are 15 in the Northern Territory and we have added a
> further five to those, which comes to the 20 growth towns across
> the Northern Territory. Within those areas, between agencies and
> the people of the communities, we have established what is called
> local implementation plans, or LIPs. In those LIPs each of these
> towns is stressing the importance of language and culture and
> how they wish to grow those regions.[45]

2.59   To assist in reaching Closing the Gap targets the New South Wales (NSW)
Government has formed a Ministerial Taskforce for Aboriginal Affairs to
advise on the development of an Aboriginal affairs strategy and to refocus
efforts to Close the Gap in Aboriginal disadvantage in NSW. The
Ministerial Taskforce brings together Aboriginal community experts and

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42   Why Warriors Pty Ltd and the Arnhem Human Enterprise Development (AHED) project,
Submission 37, pp. 1 and 3.

43   IRCA, *Submission 68*, p. 7.

44   P Bedford, *Committee Hansard*, Halls Creek, 1 May 2012, p. 10.

45   M McCarthy, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 8.

organisational representatives to work directly with seven key Ministers to ensure that Aboriginal people and communities are a core priority for NSW Government. [46]

Education targets

2.60   The Committee received a large volume of evidence that focused on the benefits of including Indigenous language in education. Many submissions advocated for more Indigenous language and culture to be incorporated into the school curriculum in order to engage Indigenous communities with the local school community including from the beginning of learning.

2.61   Numerous academics have spent many years working with Indigenous communities looking at Indigenous language maintenance, revitalisation and revival contributed to this inquiry and emphasised the benefits of including Indigenous language in schools. A submission from Associate Professor Tonya Stebbins, La Trobe University, made the following comment in relation to teaching Indigenous languages in schools:

> Indigenous languages have an enormous potential contribution to make in relation to Closing the Gap. There is no more powerful way to reassert community authority over the schooling of children than to allow community members to teach community business within school spaces. Indigenous language programs can lead the way to changing school culture and students' perceptions about school. These changes are reflected in improved levels of attendance with flow on effects in terms of learning more generally. [47]

2.62   The success of including Indigenous languages and culture in schools was highlighted in the following statement:

> The pride in having Pitjantjatjara language and culture explicitly taught and valued in the school is immense. It builds cross generational interaction as well as helping kids master reading and writing in their foreign language, English. While in community these students do not hear, read or need English outside school hours. [48]

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46   NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Education and Community, *Submission 98*, p. 15.

47   T Stebbins, *Submission 69*, p. 2.

48   C Johnston, *Submission 32*, p. 2.

2.63   The Australian Education Union commented in its submission that
        bilingual programs are effective for children learning two languages:

> Studies into bilingual programs in schools, whereby students in
> the early years of schooling are first taught literacy (reading and
> writing) in their first language, show the effectiveness of building
> on the knowledge that children come to school with. By combining
> this with providing a strong language foundation in English, by
> about Year 4 students are able to use their knowledge of English as
> well as understandings of literacy in their first language as a base
> to master English literacy.[49]

2.64   The Why Warriors Pty Ltd and the Arnhem Human Enterprise
        Development (AHED) project informed the Committee that there was
        'strong evidence in working in the communities of north East Arnhem
        Land, that children engage more thoroughly and genuinely show more
        interest in any education provided in their own language.'[50]

2.65   Similar evidence was received in Alice Springs. The Committee heard
        about the value of learning in two languages:

> Warlpiri is like a vehicle to learn a new language and I think only
> then if we can work together on that one part of what we are
> aiming for. I think that the proper recognition of our identity and
> language makes us strong and grown-up, knowing English and
> Warlpiri together. I think that the Indigenous language can assist
> in many ways such as in translation, because that is what I grew
> up on, especially the experience in the classroom of always having
> two people, a Kardiya—a European—and a Yapa—an Aboriginal
> person, a Warlpiri person. They were both there for me to make
> sure that I got the proper education in both ways. That has been an
> important thing in my growing up in both worlds, Warlpiri and
> English.[51]

Health advantages

2.66   Health advantages including mental and physical health have been linked
        to learning and retaining one's own language. For example, in terms of
        improved mental health, a Canadian study demonstrated that 'being able
        to converse in one's own language helps produce a strong sense of self

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49   AEU, *Submission 88*, p. 1.
50   Why Warriors Pty Ltd and the AHED project, *Submission 37*, p. 4.
51   D Rice, Bilingual Resources Development Unit, *Committee Hansard*, Alice Springs, 4 April 2012,
     p. 38.

and sense of cultural continuity, which have been linked to reduced rates of suicide amongst Indigenous youth.'[52]

2.67   The Australian Bureau of Statistics released research highlighting the benefits of maintaining Indigenous languages to enhance young peoples' wellbeing. The research found that young people who spoke an Indigenous language - almost half of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in remote areas between the ages of 15 to 24 were less likely to participate in high-risk drinking and drug abuse than those young people who did not speak a traditional language.[53]

2.68   In the Utopia homelands, high value is placed on the maintenance of strong Indigenous languages and traditional cultural practices. A study found that residents of these communities were less likely to be obese, less likely to have diabetes and less prone to cardiovascular disease than Indigenous people across the rest of the Northern Territory.[54]

2.69   At a public hearing in Adelaide the link between health and languages was brought to the Committee's attention again. Rob Amery commented:

> We are seeing again and again very positive health benefits accruing. When people feel proud about themselves as individuals and feel proud about themselves as a group of people then lots of things flow from that. If we only look after people's physical needs—housing, employment, health, or whatever—then a lot of that money will be wasted, I am afraid, unless people are able to build a life for themselves and feel good about themselves as individuals and as a group. Language is one of the means of doing that.[55]

Knowledge and employment

2.70   The maintenance and use of Indigenous languages has positive implications for capacity building in Indigenous communities, particularly through community involvement and employment in resource management, art and tourism, broadcasting and interpreting.

2.71   Indigenous languages and cultural knowledge have been associated with understanding the patterns of climate change and ways to address its impacts. The 2006 Garnaut Review into climate change reported that the

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52   Office for the Arts, *Submission 127*, p. 1.
53   Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, *Submission 70*, p. 3.
54   Australian Human Rights Commission, *Social Justice Report 2009*, p. 61.
55   R Amery, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 2 April 2012, p. 3.

Torres Strait Islander people had noticed changes in animal and plant behaviour and different patterns in seasonal temperatures.

2.72   Traditional languages have vast vocabularies for naming species and describing their ecology which are little known to Western science. This is an endangered area of knowledge, and the loss of it would disadvantage all Australians. The same deep cultural knowledge that is contained in language has been essential for Indigenous Australians to demonstrate their connection to country when they are making Native Title claims.[56]

2.73   In Darwin, Professor Christie discussed the value of supporting languages for ecological reasons and scientific progress:

> The languages not only refer to the world out there but actually take place in particular sorts of knowledge work. Collaborations between Aboriginal people on country and scientists are significantly enhanced by the use of these languages. Those languages therefore need really to be thoroughly supported at all levels. A key example of that, as you know, is probably the fire work that has been done throughout the Northern Territory and the tropical savannahs where Aboriginal knowledge authorities are working with scientists on big carbon abatement projects. Our point was that language plays a key role in embedding the knowledge practices that allow that to happen, and the economic significance of keeping those languages alive and strong.[57]

2.74   Dr William Fogarty, who appeared at a public hearing in Canberra reiterated the importance of Indigenous languages for supporting employment pathways for Indigenous Australians. He commented:

> ...Indigenous land and sea management and associated employment and development outcomes depend directly on the continued strength and availability of Indigenous language and associated Indigenous knowledge. It is my hope that the new national Indigenous languages policy will explicitly recognise the current and potential benefit and contribution of Indigenous languages to development options, livelihood options and employment pathways for Indigenous people.[58]

2.75   There are strong potential employment outcomes for Aboriginal communities through language acquisition. Professor Muhlhausler et al,

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56   Australian Human Rights Commission, *Social Justice Report 2009*, p. 63.

57   M Christie, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 55.

58   W Fogarty, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 November 2011, p. 2.

in the 2004 *Economic Costs and Benefits of Australian Indigenous Languages*
report highlighted a range of economic and social benefits for Australia
from the enhanced knowledge of complex phenomena gained from
Indigenous languages. The report acknowledged that Aboriginal
languages are repositories of traditional knowledge developed over
thousands of years of interacting with their environment, building a
detailed knowledge of the ecosystem. Ecological knowledge is invaluable
in areas of environmental management, biodiversity, and pharmaceutical
development within ecosystems that are generally poorly understood.[59]

2.76   Other sectors of the economy that create employment opportunities for
Indigenous Australians through language include the art and tourism
sector. Indigenous cultural knowledge is the foundation of these
industries and benefits from Indigenous cultural industries flow on to
other Australians and to the Australian economy.[60]

2.77   The Indigenous tourism industry offers Aboriginal language speakers
significant opportunities for employment. An increase in tourist numbers
may reflect a heightened interest among overseas tourists in Aboriginal
culture. Any increase in tourism benefits the whole community.

2.78   The Committee received evidence in Broome that demonstrated the value
of Indigenous language programs in schools leading to employment in the
community that utilised the language skills:

> Anecdotally, we hear evidence of students who have gone through
> the primary school program and into the high school program
> who in their employment are able to use their Aboriginal language
> skills whether they are in a bank, a CES office or working in an old
> people's home.[61]

2.79   Radio and television broadcasting provides sizeable employment
opportunities through the use of Indigenous languages. The remote
Indigenous media sector regularly employs about 300-400 Indigenous
media workers as broadcasters, producers, journalists, trainers,
translators, cultural officers, archivists and performers.[62] The Indigenous
Remote Communications Association added 'the normalisation of

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59   New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Education and
Communities, *Submission 98*, pp. 11-12.

60   New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Education and
Communities, *Submission 98*, p. 12.

61   L Jones, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 11.

62   IRCA, *Submission 68a*, p. 1.

Indigenous languages through daily broadcasting and communications services is seen as critical to language continuity.'[63]

2.80   The Committee was interested to hear about the number of Indigenous languages being broadcast on the Indigenous Community Television (ICTV) service:

> There are 60 hours of programming. There is a video streaming site with over 400 videos available. Broadcast delivers video content in 23 different languages from around Australia. The program in language runs approximately 70 percent of ICTV.[64]

> ICTV broadcasts/delivers video content in 23 different languages from around Australia, as follows: Alyawarr, Anmatyerr, Arrarnte, Bardi, Djambarrpuynu, Eastern Anmatyerr, Gija, Karajarri, Kukatja, Luritja, Mangala, Martu, Nga_gikurunggurr, Ngaanyatjarra, Ngarluma, Pintubi, Pitjantjatjara, Tiwi, Umpila, Warlpiri, Worla, Yindjibarndi, Yolngu Matha.[65]

2.81   Recently, information technology has been recognised as an avenue of employment. During a public hearing in Canberra, Dr Inge Kral informed the Committee that:

> ... highlighted last year at the AIATSIS Information Technologies and Indigenous Communities symposium, held in Canberra, was the ability of IT to generate unique opportunities for employment and local enterprise development in this emerging new digital economy. The advent of digital technologies has seen young people developing expertise in filmmaking, music production and digital archiving.[66]

2.82   Knowledge of Indigenous languages provides opportunities for Indigenous people to be employed as translators and interpreters. This is an area that has been under review in Australia for some time and is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Committee comment

2.83   A child learns their first language not at school but in the home and community in which they reside. Similarly teaching a child their language and a sense of identity must come from a family and community. The Committee notes the vast diversity of Indigenous communities and the

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63   IRCA, *Submission 68a*, p. 2.
64   L Cavanagh, *Committee Hansard*, Alice Springs, 4 April 2012, p. 18.
65   IRCA, *Supplementary Submission 68a*, p. 7.
66   I Kral, *Committee Hansard*, 3 November 2011, p. 2.

capacity of different communities and families to provide children with a positive and strong sense of culture and wellbeing. Sadly there are communities where the level of social dysfunction is such that the children lack positive role models, a sense of belonging and in some instances they lack a firm grounding in one language.

2.84   The Committee does not see it as the role of the government to teach a child their culture or their first language. However, there is a role for governments to assist communities to take on this responsibility when a history of social problems has diminished the current capacity of a community to be able to do so for itself. The Committee argues that governments must continue the early education of language and culture but it is families and communities that raise a child with the language and values that are important to that child.

2.85   There is a critical role for governments to ensure that the services delivered, such as health and education, are accessible to any child in Australia and to value that child's heritage and culture. For Indigenous Australians, valuing and incorporating culture and language should be a core element of all schooling across Australia for the benefit of Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians.

2.86   Indigenous language learning must proceed as a partnership where different parties bear the responsibility for the nurturing and learning of a child and collaboratively raise them to live both ways – strong in their language and culture, skilled to make choices for their future and proud in who they are and the contribution they make towards growing a strong Australia as a nation.

2.87   The evidence collected during the inquiry was supportive of languages fostering higher levels of self esteem, developing an enthusiasm for learning and a better understanding of cultural identity for Indigenous Australians. Therefore the Committee believes that it is essential for language learning, revitalisation and revival to be well supported by Commonwealth and state funding.

2.88   Past policies of Australian governments have contributed to the loss of language and culture in many Indigenous communities. The Committee acknowledges that many of the same themes that are covered in this report have been addressed over several reports spanning more than two decades. The Committee believes successive governments have failed to prevent the continued decline of Indigenous languages.

2.89   There has been considerable funding and effort by all governments and community groups in assisting with the Closing the Gap strategy. The

Committee views the link between Indigenous languages and improvements to overall wellbeing as an essential element that will continue to help meet governments' targets of Closing the Gap.

2.90   The Committee believes that a lack of focus on Indigenous languages is one of the missing pieces in the Closing the Gap framework. The Committee considers that the incorporation of the National Indigenous Language Policy into the Closing the Gap framework would bring to the forefront the importance of preserving language and culture in meeting Closing the Gap targets.

2.91   The Committee sees the inclusion of Indigenous languages in the Closing the Gap targets as an essential acknowledgement of the collaborative approach that must take place between governments and Indigenous communities. The role of governments is to assist Indigenous communities to achieve the same opportunities and wellbeing outcomes as non Indigenous Australians. Indigenous Australians must continue to demonstrate a commitment to develop partnerships with governments to preserve and maintain languages within communities.

Recommendation 1 - Closing the Gap framework

2.92   **The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government include in the Closing the Gap framework acknowledgement of the fundamental role and importance of Indigenous languages in preserving heritage and improving outcomes for Indigenous peoples.**

2.93   The Committee believes there are substantial benefits to be gained for all Australians in raising the awareness and profile of Indigenous languages throughout Australia. Non Indigenous Australians being made aware of Indigenous languages and culture clearly has reconciliation benefits. The fact that many Australians are unaware of the rich diversity of Indigenous languages that have existed in Australia is an area that should be improved.

Recommendation 2 - Signage in Indigenous languages

2.94   **The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government include in the National Indigenous Languages Policy 2009 a commitment to support and progress signage of place names and landmarks in local Indigenous languages.**

2.95   While dual naming or Indigenous naming may be viewed by some as merely symbolic the Committee is convinced of the value and place of symbolism in changing attitudes, healing scars and forging new futures.

2.96   The Committee thought the example of dual naming had great potential for many local and national sites throughout Australia. The Committee views this as a way of reaching out to many Australians and increasing awareness of Indigenous language and cultural throughout Australia. The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government give full support to projects that fund dual naming of places throughout Australia.

2.97   The Committee considers that Parliamentarians are in unique positions to demonstrate leadership in promoting the benefits of strengthening and recognising the languages and culture local to their electorate, and therefore build on the reconciliation path between Indigenous Australians and non Indigenous Australians.

Recommendation 3 – Parliamentary recognition of Indigenous languages

2.98   **The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Parliament demonstrate leadership in the recognition and valuing of Indigenous languages by:**

- **considering how to incorporate Indigenous languages in the Parliament House building and in the operations of the Parliament, and**

- **encouraging all Members of Parliament to:**
  - ⇒ **be aware of and recognise the Indigenous language groups local to their electorate**
  - ⇒ **where, possible and appropriate, acknowledge traditional owners and utilise language names for places and landmarks, and**
  - ⇒ **support schools and community groups in their area to recognise, value and where possible utilise Indigenous language names.**

2.99   The Committee notes that in the airline industry QANTAS has made significant contributions towards reconciliation by committing to a Reconciliation Action Plan which sets out key strategies to create meaningful relationships and sustainable job opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. QANTAS uses symbolic

representations of Indigenous culture such as the exterior painting of aircrafts in Indigenous artwork and creating Indigenous art inspired uniforms for flight attendants, which has great value in reaching out to all Australians and overseas visitors travelling by air in Australia.

2.100   The Committee suggests that airlines could help raise the awareness of Indigenous languages throughout Australia, by announcing to all passengers the name of the traditional lands the aircraft has landed on. Further, a greeting could be announced in the local Indigenous language if available. For example, in Broome, the Committee learned how to say a greeting (Ngaji mingan?) and thank you (Galiya) in the local Yawuru language. Indigenous communities should look for opportunities to develop partnerships with the business and non government sector to facilitate a greater understanding of the significance of Indigenous languages in Australia.

2.101   The Committee views this recognition of Indigenous languages would benefit Indigenous Australians, non Indigenous Australians and foreign visitors. Indigenous languages are unknown to the majority of Australians and by encouraging the use of Indigenous language in every day settings would raise the awareness and understanding of Australia's valuable Indigenous culture.

2.102   Just as all Australians appreciate the art, dance and music of Indigenous Australians, so languages should be taking their place as part of the rich cultural diversity and heritage of this country.

2.103   The Committee encourages all Australians to take pride in the Indigenous languages that surround us and to value our rich heritage. We should all have an interest in and where possible learn about and incorporate local Indigenous languages into our workplaces, our communities and our everyday lives. Each and every one of us has a role to play in progressing us along the path of reconciliation and in defining what it means to be Australian.

Overview on Indigenous languages

2.104   The challenges to preserve and revitalise Indigenous languages are considerable. Indigenous languages are critically endangered in Australia and they continue to die out at a rapid rate. Prior to colonisation, Australia had 250 distinct languages that subdivided into 600 dialects. [67]

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67   A dialect is a variety of a language spoken in a particular area by a particular group.

2.105   Of an original number of over 250 known Australian Indigenous
        languages, only about 145 Indigenous languages are still spoken and the
        vast majority of these, about 110, are in the severely and critically
        endangered categories. This critically endangered category indicates
        languages that are spoken only by small groups of people mostly over 40
        years old.

2.106   Eighteen languages are strong in the sense of being spoken by all age
        groups, but three or four of these are showing some signs of moving into
        endangerment. There are many other languages where only a few words
        and phrases are used, and there is great community support in many parts
        of the country for reclamation and heritage learning programs for such
        languages.[68]

2.107   In November 2005, the *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005
        (NILS report 2005*) was prepared by AIATSIS and the Federation of
        Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Corporation (FATSILC)
        for the then Department of Communications, Information Technology and
        the Arts.

2.108   The *NILS report 2005* is the most recent assessment on the state of
        Indigenous languages in Australia. At a public hearing Doug Marmion
        informed the Committee that an updated version of the NILS report is due
        to be released at the end of 2012.

2.109   Classifying Indigenous languages is not a straight forward task. The *NILS
        report 2005* detailed the challenges that are presented when carrying out
        such a task. The *NILS report 2005* discussed the ways languages can be
        classified as language vitality and language endangerment. This included
        the subjective nature of collecting language data on speaking, using and
        identifying with a language.[69]

2.110   The *NILS report 2005* made the following comment on the three main
        categories of language:

        It has been widely understood and accepted that there are three
        basic types of language situations:

        ■ Strong− all age groups including children are speaking the
           traditional Indigenous language;

        ■ Endangered− the children are not learning to speak the
           language (although they may understand it a little); and

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68   AIATSIS and FATSILC, *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005,* p. 3.
69   AIATSIS and FATSILC, *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005,* p. 27.

■ No longer spoken or 'sleeping' – nobody speaks the
language except for a few words and phrases.[70]

2.111   The *NILS report 2005* concluded that the situation of Australia's languages
is grave and requires urgent action. Without intervention the language
knowledge will cease to exist in the next 10 to 30 years.[71]

Evolving languages

2.112   Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages refer to all the
languages spoken within Australia prior to colonisation. These languages
inform a holistic worldview of land, culture and identity, and are
linguistically very different to English.[72]

2.113   Traditional languages are recognised and named as languages of country.
They are acknowledged as having cultural and heritage significance. In
some remote local community contexts they are the everyday languages of
communication.[73]

2.114   Contact languages are spoken across many regions as first languages.
Contact languages have evolved from traditional languages as a result of
several different language groups coming together. English has been
incorporated into traditional Indigenous languages and as a result creoles
have developed in particular areas in Australia. Contact languages can be
called home language, first language or a named creole.

2.115   Creole was described to the Committee as being a full language which
develops from a pidgin because people start to use the pidgin as a general
means of communication and children then grow up learning it as their
first language. Australian creoles combine characteristics of English,
Indigenous languages and other languages.[74]

2.116   The Committee was informed that creoles were full linguistic languages:

> There has been widespread misunderstanding about contact
> language varieties in Australia. They are often referred to as being
> a bad form of the dominant language, which is English. People
> might refer to them as 'broken English' or 'bad English' and other

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70   AIATSIS and FATSILC, *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005,* p. 24.

71   Australian Human Rights Commission, *Social Justice Report 2009*, p. 58.

72   Queensland DET, *Submission 109*, p. 7.

73   D Angelo, *Submission 153,* p. 1.

74   D Marmion, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 7 July 2011, p. 7.

terms like that. Creoles and related varieties are actually full
linguistic languages.[75]

2.117   The Committee was informed about several creoles that are currently is
use in Australia. The most widely spoken creole is 'Top End Kriol' which
is spoken throughout the Northern Territory, across to the Kimberley
region and even extends into some regions of the Cape York. This creole is
sometimes called Broome English, Broome Kriol, Kimberley Kriol or
Aboriginal English. 'Yumpla Tok' is spoken in the Torres Strait and
several other creoles exist in Queensland. Ms Claire Gorman made the
following comment at a public hearing in Brisbane:

> There are a number of creole varieties that are spoken throughout
> Queensland. These creoles may not be officially recognised but
> they may be referred to in their communities by a range of names
> such as Murri broken slang, 'lingo' and 'Aboriginal English'. Many
> Torres Strait Islander students speak Torres Strait creoles, which is
> now known in the Torres Strait as Yumpla Tok. In some places
> there is strong recognition and ownership of these language
> varieties such as Yumpla Tok in the Torres Strait. At Yarrabah in
> Far North Queensland they are now referring to their everyday
> vernacular as Yarrie lingo, and the community has quite a lot of
> ownership around that.[76]

2.118   The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) informed the Committee of
the languages being spoken in the Torres Strait. They stated:

> There are two traditional languages in the Torres Strait region.
> Meriam Mir, spoken in the Eastern lslands, has two distinct dialect
> groups, and Kala Lagaw Ya has four distinct dialect groups. A
> lingua franca known as Torres Strait Creole is also spoken as a
> common language shared between all the different languages and
> dialect groups.[77]

2.119   The Committee was provided with an example of what was called Broome
English during a public hearing. Ms Yu explained the following to the
Committee:

> I think Broome English is an amalgamation of Asian languages,
> English and all the different Aboriginal languages around the
> place. It is also English words which could have a completely

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75   C Gorman, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2012, p. 2.
76   C Gorman, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2011, p. 2.
77   TSRA, *Submission 146*, p. 2. A table outlining languages spoken in the Torres Strait can be
     found in the submission on pp. 2-3.

> different meaning. I will give you an example. I do not know if
> they still use it in football, but one of the terms in football was he
> "upstairs 'em"—meaning he took a screamer over somebody else.
> So that is an example of Broome English.[78]

2.120   In many areas of Australia, the traditional/heritage languages of
         Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are no longer in everyday
         use, so they are no longer spoken as the home language (sometimes also
         referred to as the 'first language' or 'mother tongue') of the young people
         within the community. These young people may speak a variety of
         Aboriginal English and/or an Aboriginal or Torres Strait creole and/or
         Standard Australian English as their home language.

2.121   Varieties of Aboriginal English and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
         creoles have distinct and systematic differences from Standard Australian
         English, both linguistically and conceptually. These languages are
         sometimes referred to as 'contact languages' or 'mixed languages'; they
         will be the only language spoken by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait
         Islander students beginning school, and thus these students strongest
         language for learning.[79]

2.122   At the public hearing in Brisbane the Committee was interested to hear
         more about the term contact languages. Miss Gorman explained:

> The term 'contact language' has been used because there is a
> spectrum. Not only can creole move along a spectrum from more
> like standard Australian English to more like the traditional
> language, but there is also confusion. The distinction between
> creole and a dialect is a very grey area. That is why that term has
> been used.[80]

2.123   The Queensland DET summarised the different Indigenous languages in
         use in Queensland. In Queensland most students in Indigenous
         communities speak a contact language (Aboriginal and Torres Strait
         Islander creole or related variety) as their vernacular or everyday
         language. Contact languages, such as creoles and related varieties, are
         languages that have evolved through contact between people who speak
         different languages. A number of different creole varieties are spoken
         throughout Queensland.

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78   C Yu, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 8.

79   The Australian Council of TESOL Associations, ACTA, *Submission 72*, p. 8.

80   C Gorman, *Committee Hansard,* Brisbane, 6 October 2011, p. 3.

2.124   In a few areas in Queensland, students may speak a traditional language as their strongest variety. These areas include:

■ Aurukun where students may speak a Wik variety as their first language

■ on Saibai, Dauan and Boigu Islands in the top west of the Torres Strait, where they may speak Kawa Kawaw Ya as their first language or as a strong second, and

■ far west Queensland from Camooweal to Urandangi where some children whose families have links to places to the west (such as Lake Nash in the Northern Territory) may speak Alyawarre. [81]

Number of speakers

2.125   Languages or dialects can be maintained by very small groups of people. The small number of speakers of some Indigenous languages is not necessarily a result of declining use. Indigenous people who speak Indigenous languages now have increased contact with speakers of other Indigenous languages, English and creoles. They are exposed to English through the education system and the media. In this context, the maintenance of Indigenous languages with small numbers of speakers is more difficult.[82]

2.126   In 2010, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reported that:

■ 33% of Indigenous children in remote areas spoke an Indigenous language as their main language at home.

■ For Indigenous people aged 15 years and over:

⇒ 42% in remote areas spoke an Indigenous language at home;

⇒ 73% in remote areas spoke, or spoke some words of, an Indigenous language in comparison to 32% of those living in major cities and 28% of people in regional areas;

⇒ 15% had difficulty in both communicating in English and being understood by English speakers.[83]

2.127   The difficulty in categorising Indigenous languages was brought to the Committee's attention. For example, the data collected by the ABS may have asked if an Indigenous language was spoken however it does not

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81   Queensland DET, *Submission 109*, pp. 6-7.

82   ABS, 'Population composition: Indigenous languages' <www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/2f762f95845417aeca25706c00834efa/aadb12e0bbec2820c a2570ec001117a5!OpenDocument> accessed 16 July 2012.

83   ABS, *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey 2008, www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0/* accessed 12 September 2012.

analyse the proficiency of the language spoken nor the type of Indigenous language, such as whether it is a traditional or contact language.

2.128   The *NILS report 2005* used the UNESCO indicators to assess the state of languages. Indicator one focused on intergenerational language transmission, Indicator two focused on the absolute number of speakers and Indicator three focused on the proportion of speakers. Results from the *NILS report 2005* highlight the dramatic decline in the number of language speakers:

> Using the NILS Indicator One—Intergenerational Language Transmission data of proficiency/use by age group it is evident that:

> ■ Between 3 and 6 languages are 'safe/strong' (Grade 5)

> ■ 2 languages are 'definitely endangered' (Grade 3)

> ■ 9 languages are 'severely endangered' (Grade 2)

> ■ 14 languages are 'critically endangered' (Grade 1).[84]

2.129   Table 2.1 shows the Grading system that was used in the NILS report.

Table 2.1   Grading System

Degree of endangerment	Grade	Speaker population	Age Groups
Safe	5	Language is used by all age groups including children.	All
Unsafe	4	The language is used by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains.	Used by between 30% and 70% of the <20 age group
Definitely endangered	3	The language is used mostly by the parental generation and upwards.	Used only by >20 years old
Severely endangered	2	The language is used mostly by the grandparental generation and upwards.	>40 years old
Critically endangered	1	The language is known to very few speakers of great - grandparental generation.	>60 years old
Extinct	0	There is no speaker left.	None

Source: National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005, p. 31

84   AIATSIS and FATSILC, *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005,* p. 11.

At risk languages

2.130   The *NILS report 2005* emphasised the urgency of the problem facing all
         Australians to keep many of the endangered Indigenous languages alive.
         The NILS report stated:

> Australia has been singled out as the country that has witnessed
> the largest and most rapid loss of languages of anywhere in the
> world, over the last century. The overall decline and current
> situation in Australia is similar to North America—in both cases
> Indigenous groups are similarly relatively small and powerless
> inside states dominated by settler groups mainly of European
> origin.[85]

2.131   An interesting point was made by Lola Jones where she discussed the
         urgency to revitalise traditional languages but noted two main difficulties
         traditional languages faced. One was due to the fragility of the elders who
         know the language and secondly, the influence of and prevalence of
         English:

> We need our old people, and our old people are the ones that we
> need to keep going back to. It might be three or four old people
> you have to go to. But it is very hard, because our old people are
> getting frail. In some communities people do not see the urgency
> because they say, 'Plenty of people talk language.' But the reality is
> for all of our languages that they really are endangered by English,
> Kriol and Aboriginal English.[86]

2.132   This finding was noted in the *NILS Report 2005* in discussions about
         intergenerational language transmission and endangerment:

> At Lajamanu in the NT, a similar first phase of shift could also be
> occurring, in the Warlpiri language, since although the children
> there still understand the old language and can speak it under
> certain circumstances, they mostly choose not to and instead speak
> a mixed code of 'Light Warlpiri'.[87]

Current languages in use

2.133   The 2011 Census data showed that more Aboriginal and Torres Strait
         Islander people are speaking an Indigenous language at home in
         comparison with the data from the 2006 Census. This increase could be

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85   AIATSIS and FATSILC, *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005,* p. 24.

86   L Jones, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 11.

87   AIATSIS and FATSILC, *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005,* p. 68.

attributed to either an increase in work being carried out in this area having positive impact on the number of Indigenous speakers or possibly an improvement to the way the data is collected more accurately.

2.134   For example, the Census head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander statistics commented on the improvements in the way the data was collected:

> [The ABS] ... employed people who know everyone in every house, speak the local languages, so that people could have some ownership of the process. In urban communities people provided support for Indigenous people and also tried to break down barriers by explaining that the information is kept private and what it is used for.[88]

2.135   In Australia about 61 800 people speak an Indigenous language up from 56 000 in 2006 census data. Of these, about 21 percent speak an Australian creole.

2.136   In 2011 the ABS calculated that 56 681 Northern Territory residents had a language background other than English, equivalent to around 27 percent of the population. The 2011 census found that, of the total Northern Territory population, 16.3 percent (34 438 people) speak an Indigenous language[89]:

> The largest group of Indigenous language users (5 417) identified as speakers of Arandic language varieties; 77 percent (4 173) claimed to speak it well or very well. The second largest group are the 5 097 who identify as Yolngu speakers; 68.7 percent (3 501) claimed to be proficient; that is, to speak it well or very well. What these figures could be taken to indicate is that intergenerational language shift is more evident in the northeast of the Territory than it is in the Centre.[90]

2.137   AIATSIS has been managing a database for Indigenous languages called AUSTLANG. The core of AUSTLANG is a database which assembles information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages from a number of sources. The database contains the following information about each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language: alternative/variant names and spellings, history of the number of speakers, geographical

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88   The Koori Mail, *Indigenous Population is 548 370 – a 20 percent jump!*, 27 June 2012, p. 5.

89   Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing*, 2011, <www.agencysearch.australia.gov.au/search/search.cgi?collection=agencies&form=simple& profile=abs&query=census of population and housing 2011> accessed 12 September 2012.

90   B Devlin, *Submission 81*, p. 2.

distribution, classifications from various sources, resources, documentation, programs and researchers.[91]

2.138   During the inquiry the Committee noted the significant momentum on language projects and research being carried out throughout Australia in relation to Indigenous languages. It was evident by the number of submissions received for the inquiry as well as the number of projects on the ground either maintaining or reviving Indigenous languages. The Indigenous Languages Support program, administered by the Commonwealth Office for the Arts stressed the point that each year, funding requests far exceed the total amount of funding available. In 2011-12, the program received 90 applications seeking approximately $14.5 million against the 2011-12 budget of $9.6 million.[92]

2.139   Using estimated numbers of speakers of languages, based on several available sources including NILS, there are 145 languages still being spoken, of which:

- 19 languages have more than 500 speakers

- 45 languages have between 10 and 50 speakers, and

- 67 languages have less than 10 speakers.

2.140   It should be noted that language shift and endangerment are the critical factors in languages having less than 50 speakers. The NILS report predicted that based on current trends, by 2050, if allowed to remain unchecked, the situation of Australia's Indigenous languages would be such that there was unlikely to be any significant numbers of Indigenous languages spoken in Australia. It may be that of the current 18, only a small number of strong languages would be left by 2050. [93]

Committee comment

2.141   The Committee notes the evolving nature of languages and understands that research and data collection is challenging given the sparse geographical spread of Indigenous languages throughout Australia. The Committee commends the significant work that was carried out for the National Indigenous Languages Survey and published in 2005 (*NILS 2005*

91   AIATSIS, *Australian Indigenous Languages Database*, <http://austlang.aiatsis.gov.au/disclaimer.php> accessed 2 August 2012.

92   Office for the Arts, *Submission 127*, pp. 6-7.

93   Details on specific languages and the number of speakers in Australia can be referenced in chapter 6 of the NILS 2005 report. AIATSIS and FATSILC, *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005,* p. 68.

Report) and keenly awaits the updated report due to be published in the latter part of 2012.

2.142   The Committee considers that the status attributed to traditional languages should be the same for all creole languages, also called contact languages. In the past, creoles have not been classified as languages in their own right however a majority of witnesses who spoke with the Committee deemed creoles to be distinct languages. The Committee believes there will be important benefits for Indigenous children in schools where the contact language or creole is recognised as their first language and ESL teaching is used accordingly. This is discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

2.143   The Committee notes that through processes of colonisation, changed settlement patterns and dispersed kinship connections, creoles have become the identified home language for some communities. These languages must be recognised for the value and meaning they hold for the communities that speak them.

2.144   The Committee was disturbed to realise the dramatic decline in Indigenous languages that is continuing within each generation. The Committee recognises the significant role that languages play in assisting to improve health, education, employment and general wellbeing indicators within Indigenous communities.

2.145   The Committee is aware of the significant Indigenous cultural heritage that is stored with Indigenous languages. Therefore the Committee strongly encourages the Commonwealth Government to increase the prominence and understanding of Indigenous languages for all Australians through a variety of measures that are discussed in the following chapters.

3

Indigenous languages policy

3.1   At the Commonwealth Government level, a National Indigenous Languages Policy has been in place since 2009, following the announcement of *Indigenous Languages – A National Approach*.[1] The Office for the Arts (OFTA) is the lead agency for the implementation of the policy, and funds language-related activities through its Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) program.

3.2   The states and territories have developed policies relating to Indigenous languages that are, in general, related mainly to their respective education policies.

3.3   While Indigenous languages policy is an integral issue in education, as Dr William Fogarty told the Committee, it is also fundamental 'for Indigenous identity, cultural reproduction and the aspirations for Indigenous economic and social development'. [2]

3.4   This chapter begins by examining the historical policy context before discussing the national Indigenous languages policy and the role of the states and territories. It then examines the sources of funding that are available to support a range of activities that are being undertaken to maintain and revive Indigenous languages. The chapter also discusses the constitutional recognition of Indigenous languages, and the relationship between languages policy and international human rights instruments.

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1   Office for the Arts, 'Indigenous Languages – A National Approach 2009' <www.arts.gov.au/indigenous/languages>, accessed 3 July 2012.

2   W Fogarty, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 3 November 2011, p. 1.

Australian Indigenous language policies

3.5   Estimates show that at the time of colonisation there was an estimated 250 Australian Indigenous languages being used and today there are about 18 languages, strong in the sense of being spoken by significant numbers of people across all age groups.[3]

3.6   Government policies of the past have been, in part, responsible for the decline of Indigenous languages. For example, the Committee heard evidence in Adelaide that the government actively repressed the use of Indigenous languages by Aboriginal people. Dr Alitya Rigney said that when she was 'growing up on Point Pearce, it was forbidden to speak language by law.'[4]

3.7   Similarly, Mrs Verna Koolmatrie recalled not being able to be immersed in her traditional language when she was growing up. Mrs Koolmatrie said that:

> I did not have that privilege and neither did the Ngarrindjeri
> people in general. If you are on the community, which was called
> a mission at the time, it was supposed to not be spoken at all. So,
> yes, I am one of the people who missed out.[5]

3.8   Limited recognition of Indigenous languages occurred in the 1960s via the development of bilingual education programs in some Northern Territory community schools (where English was not the first language). The implementation of a bilingual education program in the Northern Territory has received varying levels of Northern Territory Government support through to the present day.

3.9   The first Commonwealth policy to significantly address Indigenous languages was the *National Policy on Languages* of 1987.[6] The main objective of the policy was to outline the nation's 'choices about language issues' in the context of Australia's emergent multiculturalism. The policy covered all language-related activities in Australia, including policy specific to Indigenous languages. It recommended the development of the National Aboriginal Languages Project (NALP) to fund Indigenous language education programs and projects. The main outcome of this policy was the provision of funding to community based Indigenous language programs.

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3   AIATSIS and FATSILC, *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005,* p. 3.
4   A Rigney, Kaurna Warra Pintyandi, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 2 April 2012, p. 1.
5   V Koolmatrie, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 2 April 2012, p. 21.
6   J Bianco, *National Policy on Languages,* Australian Government Publishing. Service (AGPS), Canberra, 1987.

3.10 *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy* was released as a White Paper in 1991.[7] The main objective of the policy was to outline a strategy to promote language and literacy in Australia. The policy emphasised the importance of competency in both English and Languages Other Than English (LOTE) to enhance educational outcomes and communication within Australia and in the international community. The policy provided funding for Regional Aboriginal Language Centres and other organisations and also led to the establishment of the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and Culture (FATSILC), which was auspiced as the national peak body for community based Indigenous language programs in Australia. The policy placed an emphasis on school-based educational programs; however the extent to which schools followed the national policy was dependent on the interest and resources of local school administrations.

3.11 In 1992 the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs tabled the report *Language and Culture – A Matter of Survival* as a result of its inquiry into the maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages.[8]

3.12 The terms of reference of the inquiry were:

- The nature and extent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language loss

- The means by which remaining Aboriginal languages can be maintained and recorded

- The funding of Aboriginal language programs, and

- What work is already under way in Australia in both recording and maintenance of language.

3.13 The main recommendations of the inquiry and government responses to those recommendations are summarised in Table One.

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7 J Dawkins, Minister for Employment Education and Training, *Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy*, 2 September 1991, AGPS, Canberra, 1993.

8 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Language and Culture: A Matter of Survival*, 1992.

Table One   Recommendations and government responses from 1992 Committee report

Main recommendation	Government response
To raise awareness of the status and importance of Indigenous languages.	Campaigns planned by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET).
To train and encourage Indigenous media organisations to use local languages.	ATSIC to review and implement.
The training, provision and use of Indigenous interpreters (particularly in the justice system), and the establishment of a national interpreter service for Indigenous languages.	Importance recognised, however the funding implications of encouraging the widespread use of interpreters need careful consideration.
Improved teacher training for teachers working in Indigenous communities.	Training programs in development, but states are primarily responsible.
The provision of language teachers and linguistic training for Indigenous communities.	Importance recognised, however no substantive changes made to supplement existing programs.
The provision of bilingual or bicultural education to all Indigenous children whose first language is other than English.	States are primarily responsible.

Source   *House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Language and Culture: A Matter of Survival, 1992; Government Response to the Recommendations of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs inquiry into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Language Maintenance Report 'A Matter of Survival', June 1992.*

3.14   Following the Committee's 1992 inquiry, the National Indigenous Languages Survey (NILS) was commissioned in 2005.[9] This report, by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and FATSILC, provided the most comprehensive analysis of the status of Indigenous languages in Australia to date, and proposed a

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9   Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (AIATSIS) and the Federation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and Culture (FATSILC), *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005.*

range of strategic and programmatic solutions to redress the decline of Indigenous languages.

National Indigenous Languages Policy 2009

3.15   In 2009 the Commonwealth Government announced a national Indigenous languages policy: *Indigenous Languages – A National Approach*.[10] The policy was a response to the NILS Report 2005, which found that the situation of Australia's Indigenous languages was grave and required urgent action.

3.16   In the policy announcement, the Government stated that it was committed to addressing the serious problem of language loss in Indigenous communities.

Objectives

3.17   The stated objectives of the National Indigenous Languages Policy are:

- National Attention: To bring national attention to Indigenous languages – the oldest surviving languages in the world; and the pressures they face
- Critically Endangered Languages: Reinforce use of critically endangered Indigenous languages that are being only partly spoken to help prevent decline in use and to maintain or extend their common, everyday use as much as possible
- Working with Languages to Close the Gap: In areas where Indigenous languages are being spoken fully and passed on, making sure that government recognises and works with these languages in its agenda to Close the Gap
- Strengthening Pride in Identity and Culture: To restore the use of rarely spoken or unspoken Indigenous languages to the extent that the current language environment allows, and
- Supporting Indigenous Language Programs in Schools: To support and maintain the teaching and learning of Indigenous languages in Australian schools.

Actions

3.18   The stated actions of the National Indigenous Languages Policy are:
- National Attention
  ⇒ Undertake a feasibility study for the National Indigenous Languages Centre recommended by the NILS Report

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10   Office for the Arts, 'Indigenous Languages – A National Approach 2009' <www.arts.gov.au/indigenous/languages> accessed 3 July 2012.

⇒ Increase public recognition and appreciation of Indigenous languages by expanding the use of these languages across public and government functions, and

⇒ Support greater coordination and assistance amongst Indigenous language centres to maximise their impact nationally and to reach languages not currently supported.

■ Critically Endangered Languages

⇒ The Indigenous Languages Support (formerly the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records) program, administered by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, is investing $9.6 million in 2011-12 on 67 activities around Australia supporting the revival and maintenance of Indigenous languages

⇒ Increase use of new technology to broaden the impact of language maintenance and revival activities by local community Indigenous language centres

⇒ Pilot Early Childhood Language Nests and Mobile Language Teams to supplement the work of language centres, especially in more remote areas that are not within easy reach, and

⇒ Consider Tax deductible status to Indigenous languages organisations through the Register of Cultural Organisations for maintaining and reviving Indigenous languages.

■ Working with Languages to Close the Gap

⇒ Given the centrality of language to strong Indigenous culture, and the broader social benefits of functional and resilient families and communities, better targeting support for Indigenous languages as part of a broader national focus on Indigenous culture generally, will contribute to the overall well-being of Indigenous communities

⇒ COAG has committed $38.6 million towards interpreting and translating services as part of the new Remote Service Delivery sites. The Remote Service Delivery National Partnership (RSD NP) provides for the strengthening of interpreting and translating services in response to local needs in each of the priority locations. In addition to the employment of interpreters in each location, the Commonwealth is responsible for working with the States and Northern Territory to introduce a national framework for the effective supply and use of Indigenous language

interpreters and translators. It will include protocols for the use of interpreters and translators.

⇒ Components of the proposed national framework include:

- development and strengthening of Indigenous interpreting services through establishing mentor/coordinator positions, providing base salary funding for interpreters and administrative support of interpreters;

- training and accrediting Indigenous interpreters – development of nationally consistent curriculum material for training and provision of training leading to accreditation and expertise in particular subject areas;

- increasing supply of Indigenous interpreters through development and establishment of a national recruitment and retention strategy, with localised flexibility;

- increasing demand for interpreters through increased training for government and non-government employees working in relevant locations;

- translation of government information products.

⇒ Consideration could be given to forming a National Reference Group of Experts to advise on future directions of policy on Indigenous interpreters. Each of the components would involve contributions from the Commonwealth and from each of the jurisdictions.

- Strengthening Pride in Identity and Culture through Language Revival

⇒ Support community-based Indigenous language centres by increasing links with major national, state and territory cultural institutions to ensure that Indigenous languages material is properly preserved and made accessible appropriately

⇒ Through the Indigenous Contemporary Music Action Plan, support music in Indigenous languages to increase the transmission of languages across generations to younger speakers, utilising festivals and multimedia to strengthen the focus on Indigenous languages and increasing broadcasting content in Indigenous languages.

⇒ Potential collaboration with the Songroom Project, Sing Australia, Australian community Business Network and Foundation for Young Australians to work with communities where languages have been lost to promote language revival.

⇒ Encouraging more grass-roots collaboration between language learning programs and Stolen Generation members and their organisations.

■ Supporting Indigenous Language Programs in Schools

⇒ The Government commissioned the Indigenous Language Programs in Australian Schools – A Way Forward report, which revealed that between 2006 and 2007 over 16,000 Indigenous students and 13,000 non Indigenous students located in 260 Australian schools were involved in Indigenous language programs, covering over 80 different Indigenous languages.

⇒ Significant funding for languages education is being provided to the states and territories through the National Education Agreement for languages, allowing jurisdictions flexibility to determine how funding is allocated. Funding can be used to support and maintain Indigenous language programs operating in government schools.

⇒ $56.4 million is also being provided over 2009 to 2012 through the Schools Assistance Act 2008 to support the teaching of languages, including Australian Indigenous languages, in non-government schools.

⇒ Several jurisdictions are currently establishing programs to strengthen the teaching and learning of Indigenous languages in schools, including a proposal by New South Wales to develop national senior secondary Indigenous languages courses.

Indigenous languages, literacy and numeracy and the National Curriculum

3.19   The National Indigenous Languages Policy makes the following statements linking Indigenous languages to literacy, numeracy and the National Curriculum:

■ The learning of English is also a fundamental skill that all Australians, including Indigenous Australians, must have in order to maximise their learning opportunities and life chances

■ All Australian governments through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) processes have committed to halving the gap in the reading, writing and numeracy achievements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students within a decade, and

■ The Government is providing $56.4 million over four years to provide extra assistance to schools to enable them to expand intensive literacy and numeracy approaches that have been successful with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

and provide professional development support to assist teachers to prepare Individual Learning Plans for Indigenous students.

■ The National Curriculum is being developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, initially in English, mathematics, science and history. A second phase of subject areas will be developed in languages, geography and the arts.

■ Indigenous perspectives will be written into the National Curriculum to ensure that all young Australians have the opportunity to learn about, acknowledge and respect the language and culture of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.

Discussion of policy

3.20   The Committee received substantial evidence about the National Indigenous Languages Policy. A common theme was that while stakeholders welcomed the announcement of the policy, there was little evidence that it was being fully implemented.

3.21   The only funding streams that were earmarked specifically to support the policy's 'actions' were directed towards improving interpreting and translating services at Remote Service Delivery National Partnership Agreement (RSD NP) sites, and existing/ongoing funding for the Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) program.

3.22   The policy stated that funding would be provided to support the teaching of languages in schools, although that was directed towards 'all languages' and it is unclear what component would be directed towards supporting Indigenous language learning. Funding that was allocated under Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreements for school assistance was specifically targeted towards expanding intensive Standard Australian English literacy and numeracy approaches for Indigenous students.

3.23   The Australian Education Union (AEU) commended the announcement of the policy, but urged the Committee to advocate for:

■ a greater focus on the language rights of communities whose first language is not English

■ greater acceptance of the evidence showing the educational benefits of bilingual education, and

■ meaningful funding and resource commitment to support the genuine implementation of the policy.[11]

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11   AEU, *Submission 88*, p. 7.

3.24   The Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group (ESALG) welcomed the policy announcement, and called for a whole of government approach to implementation:

> The National Policy appears to have prompted increased interest in Indigenous languages around the country. This is particularly highlighted by the increase in action by Education departments (in Queensland and Victoria) moving towards offering inclusion of Indigenous languages studies in schools state wide.
>
> A whole of government approach to support the National Indigenous Languages Policy now needs to be adopted. This approach will help overcome current problems with inter-departmental policy coordination; improve needs assessments for allocating existing funding and identify priorities for future funding opportunities.[12]

3.25   Similarly, the Indigenous Remote Communications Authority (IRCA) encouraged the implementation of the policy across multiple government departments:

> Whilst IRCA welcomes the development of a National Indigenous Languages policy we believe that this policy needs greater muscle behind it to be truly effective. The announcement made in 2009 is a good start that must be built on. This policy needs to be attached to actions across departments including Education, Health, FAHCSIA, Media, NBN, Regional Affairs. The policy should enable increased flow of resources to drive projects which simultaneously create employment opportunities and support indigenous languages such as language curriculum development, cultural tourism projects and language music programs.[13]

3.26   Other responses highlighted that few concrete or newly funded activities have resulted from the policy. For example, the AEU asserted that 'there appears to be a significant disjuncture between policy statements and actual practice'.[14]

3.27   The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples were concerned that an action plan for the national policy had not been established across government portfolios. On examining the submissions received during this inquiry from government departments, the Congress commented that:

> None of the departmental submissions provided a coherent explanation of which agency was pursuing which aspect of the

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12   ESALG, *Submission 25*, p. 6.

13   IRCA, *Submission 68*, p. 9.

14   AEU, *Submission 88*, p. 18.

Action Plan for the implementation of the 2009 Policy. Furthermore, the Action Plan itself does not appear to be publicly available, making it difficult for stakeholders like Congress to monitor and evaluate progress.[15]

3.28   Ms Fabienne Balsalmo from the Australian Human Rights Commission pointed out that the current implementation of language policy is impeded by the divide across jurisdictions. Ms Balsalmo said that:

> while the national approach to Indigenous languages policy is a good step to preserve languages in principle, there are too many barriers for it to have achieved its stated aim to improve coordination between those who are already working to support Indigenous languages—and that was the ministerial statement when it was launched. The divide between Commonwealth, state and territory policy is a large obstacle in the implementation of coherent direction in language preservation in Australia.[16]

3.29   Similarly, Faith Baisden from the ESALG said that:

> written into the national policy there is an opening to involve all of the departments—make it a whole-of-government approach. I think we need to do that, so that we can get some strength into this sector. If we realise that language education is not just in this one little field; it is in health, in justice, in environment—that is what language impacts on.[17]

3.30   The Committee notes that the Commonwealth is developing a National Cultural Policy in which Indigenous languages will be considered as a significant aspect. It is anticipated the final Policy will be released in 2012. The National Cultural Policy will:

> reflect the diversity of modern Australia; protect and support Indigenous languages and culture; make the most of emerging technologies and new ideas; strengthen the capacity of the arts to contribute to society and the economy; support excellence and strengthen the role arts and creativity play in telling Australian stories.[18]

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15   National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, *Submission 139a*, p. 5.

16   F Balsalmo, Australian Human Rights Commission, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 18 November 2011, p. 2.

17   F Baisden, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2011, p. 13.

18   Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, 'National Cultural Policy' <www.culture.arts.gov.au/discussion-paper/developing-a-vision> accessed 28 August 2012.

State and Territory languages policies

3.31   State and Territory governments fund a range of Indigenous language initiatives that are intended to maintain, promote and revive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. However, at the state and territory level, Indigenous language policies are generally embedded within education policies.

3.32   For example, the Queensland Department of Education and Training (Queensland DET) is committed to improving the education of Indigenous students by way of the department's *Closing the Gap Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy*. The Strategy includes the '3 way strong language approach to support teachers to understand and respond to the complex Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language situation in Queensland'.[19]

3.33   Similarly, Indigenous languages form a part of the Western Australia Department of Education and *Training's Languages Other Than English (LOTE) Strategy*. The dual goals of this strategy for Indigenous languages are to:

- increase the levels of student achievement and participation rates in Aboriginal Languages Education, and
- maintain a critical pool of highly skilled Aboriginal language teachers providing quality sustainable language programs in Department of Education schools.[20]

3.34   The Northern Territory's Indigenous languages policy is embedded within its education policy. Where previously the territory operated a widely criticised policy of Compulsory Teaching in English for the First Four Hours of Each School Day, it has shifted recently to a Framework for Learning English as an Additional Language policy.[21]

3.35   New South Wales is the only jurisdiction that has developed a stand-alone Indigenous languages policy that has influence over a range of portfolio areas. The New South Wales Aboriginal Languages Policy, which was first established in 2004, is administered through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs.[22]

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19   Queensland DET, *Submission 109*, p. 7.

20   Western Australian Department of Education Kimberley, *Submission 117*, p. 1.

21   Northern Territory Department of Education and Training, 'Framework for Learning English as an Additional Language' <www.det.nt.gov.au/about-us/policies/documents/schools/framework-for-learning-english-as-an-additional-language>, accessed 22 August 2012.

22   Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales, 'New South Wales Aboriginal Languages Policy' <www.daa.nsw.gov.au/data/files/languagespolicyFINAL.pdf>, accessed 22 August 2012.

3.36   In consultation with Aboriginal communities, the New South Wales government developed a five year Aboriginal Languages Strategic Plan 2006-10, which 'recognised the critical role of the educational sector to the reclamation of Aboriginal languages'.[23] The Strategic Plan outlined the following four key result areas:

- Aboriginal languages in Aboriginal communities
- Aboriginal languages in the educational sector
- Aboriginal language Programs in Goals and Detention Centres, and
- Aboriginal languages in the wider community.[24]

3.37   As part of the Strategic Plan, the New South Wales Government has contributed more than $1.4 million since 2005 to 78 community based language centres through the Aboriginal Languages Research and Resource Centre (ALRRC).

3.38   The ALRRC was established in 2003 and, following a review in 2010, the coordination of language revival efforts and resources in New South Wales was transferred to a newly-established Centre for Aboriginal Languages Coordination and Development (CALCD) in 2011. The change was brought about by the review's recommendation that Aboriginal communities need to have greater ownership of language maintenance and reclamation work. The CALCD is the peak Aboriginal education advocacy body supporting language revitalisation work in New South Wales through linkages with the education system.[25]

3.39   State and Territory approaches to teaching and learning Indigenous languages will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5 of this report.

Committee comment

3.40   The Committee agrees with the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples' observation that there is no evidence of an effective action plan for the implementation of the objectives of the National Indigenous Languages Policy. The Committee is of the view that without concrete actions, clear goals and accountability, the National Indigenous Languages Policy will not achieve its intended goals. If the National Policy is to be taken seriously, then it must contain more than aspirational words.

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23   Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales, *Submission 98*, p. 16.
24   Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales, *Submission 98*, p. 16.
25   Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales, *Submission 98*, p. 17.

Recommendation 4 - Languages policy action plan

3.41   **The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government review and make publically available by March 2013 an updated action plan with clear goals, accountability and reporting requirements to implement its National Indigenous Languages Policy. The Committee further recommends that relevant Commonwealth Government agencies are required to report annually on outcomes of the action plan.**

3.42   The Committee commends the New South Wales government's ongoing commitment to supporting Indigenous languages. The Committee encourages the states and territories to work with the Commonwealth to improve language learning in Indigenous communities across all portfolio areas.

Program funding and support

3.43   The Committee heard evidence that much of the work being undertaken to maintain, revitalise or reclaim Indigenous languages is driven by local communities, and the desire of those communities to preserve their cultural heritage. The evidence indicated that, aside from some potential for developing interpreting and translating services,[26] there is little opportunity for language centres to generate enough of their own revenue to be self-sustaining.

3.44   Currently these community-run language programs and projects are reliant on a limited pool of government funding, primarily through the Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) competitive grants scheme.

3.45   The Committee heard evidence that philanthropy and other sources of private sector funding could offer another avenue of support for Indigenous language organisations, which would require changes to be made to the Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) eligibility of those organisations. This is discussed later in this chapter.

3.46   This section will begin by discussing a range of activities that are being carried out by organisations and communities to maintain, revitalise or revive their Indigenous languages. It will then examine the financial support that is available for these activities, either through government assistance, or through tax deductible donations.

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26   Office for the Arts, *Submission 127*, p. 6. The development of interpreting and translating services will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Examples of Indigenous languages maintenance and revival activities

3.47   Throughout the inquiry, the Committee received evidence about a broad range of activities, which can be categorised loosely as Indigenous language maintenance and revival. This spectrum of activities included, but were not limited to:

- the production of electronic databases of language material
- the production of children's books
- the use of languages in media broadcasting
- the learning of languages through language nests and master-apprentice programs, and
- language programs in schools.

3.48   The Committee was appreciative of the great passion and energy that many individuals and communities devoted to their work with Indigenous languages in urban, regional and remote areas of the country.

3.49   In Newcastle, the Committee visited the Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre, which has been at the forefront in developing support for language preservation and reclamation through technology. Mr Daryn McKenny, the Centre's General Manager, developed the award-winning Miromaa software, which is an easy to use database that enables people working with languages to gather, organise, analyse and produce materials to aid in language education and training. The software was initially developed to support local languages, including the Awabakal language, but it is now supporting a large number of language projects around Australia, while licenses are being distributed internationally to support language projects overseas.[27]

3.50   In Alice Springs, the Committee met with representatives of the Papulu Appar-kari Language Corporation, which is based in Tenant Creek. The Centre supports 16 language groups in the Barkley Region through a range of activities including:

- working with speakers to create dictionaries and wordlists
- producing books, readers and short stories
- producing stories in audio books and in animated computer stories, and
- working with Australian Literary and Numeracy Foundation on the First Language Learning and Literacy Program, to establish The Centre for Indigenous Literacy.

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27   D McKenny, *Committee Hansard*, Newcastle, 9 September 2011, pp. 9-15.

3.51   The Papulu Appar-kari Language centre produces excellent children's
        books, which also have wider applications beyond teaching local
        languages to children:

> These books are written in simple language and are illustrated and
> designed to engage young children, but have wider applications as
> well – a recent book about body parts was created for children and
> will prove a valuable resource for health professionals as well. To
> date we have published over 30 books, in multiple languages, as
> many as we can manage (eight, for recent titles).[28]

3.52   In Alice Springs, the Committee heard evidence from the Indigenous
        Remote Communications Association (IRCA), the peak body for remote
        media organisations, which includes eight remote Indigenous media
        organisations.[29] IRCA works closely with Indigenous Community
        Television to deliver 'video content in 23 different languages from around
        Australia'.[30]

3.53   Similarly, the Committee heard evidence from the National Indigenous
        Radio Service (NIRS) which draws on local media organisations to
        produce national radio content across a large range of Indigenous
        languages. According to NIRS, 'over 160 Aboriginal and Torres Strait
        Islander broadcasters take and contribute to the national scheduled
        program through satellite for the national service'.[31]

3.54   The Committee heard about the value of language nest programs in New
        Zealand and Hawaii, as a method of averting the loss of indigenous
        languages.[32] Language nests are a method of language learning in which
        children are exposed to Indigenous language, stories and culture from
        early childhood.

3.55   Dr Margaret Florey told the Committee that:

> The language nest models that have been very successful are those
> in New Zealand and Hawaii. In the Hawaii model, for a child to be
> accepted into a language nest the parents have to commit to start
> learning the language themselves so that the child can continue to
> use the language outside of the school. It can thrive in the home
> alongside the school context.[33]

28   Papulu Appar-kari Language Corporation, *Submission 49*, p. 1.

29   Indigenous Remote Communications Association, *Submission 68*, p. 3.

30   L Cavanagh, *Committee Hansard*, Alice Springs, 4 April 2012, p. 18

31   National Indigenous Radio Service, *Submission 56*, p. 1.

32   See, for example, Aboriginal Affairs NSW, *Submission 98*, p. 9; M Martin, *Committee Hansard*,
      Halls Creek, 1 May 2012, p. 17; J Hobson, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 13 October 2012, p. 4;
      Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity (RNLD), *Submission 130*, p. 7.

33   M Florey, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 February 2012, p. 8.

3.56   The language nest model is being drawn upon by the people of the Crocodile Islands to preserve the Yan-nhangu language and 'provide opportunities for appropriate cultural transfer'.[34] Similarly, the people of the Fitzroy Valley used language nests as a method of transferring the language and cultural knowledge of senior people to young children in the community. Ms Michelle Martin helped to facilitate the language nest and described it as a relaxed and effective learning environment.[35]

3.57   Other witnesses gave evidence about the value of the master-apprentice model for language learning in a variety of contexts.[36] The master-apprentice model was developed by the University of California and is currently run as a training program by the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival.[37]

3.58   Dr Knut Olawsky from the Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre described the benefits of the master-apprentice model for the learning of Mirrawoong in the Kununurra region. The master-apprentice program consisted:

> usually teams of just two including a fluent speaker who is called the master and a partial speaker of the traditional language who is called the apprentice. These people spend time together and have to spend this time completely using the traditional language, which may seem difficult at first if you are only a partial speaker or only have a passive knowledge of the language, but the team is supported through a variety of activities and weekly meetings to facilitate that. It is probably one of the most successful strategies that we have used so far.[38]

3.59   The Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity (RNLD) said that a lack of resources and expert knowledge of running the program in Australia was holding back the implementation of the program. RNLD said that they were having discussions with the Office for the Arts 'to try to build a pool of trained Australians who can train and support Master-Apprentice teams locally'.[39]

3.60   The Committee heard evidence about several individuals and organisations who were working with schools to deliver a variety of

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34   Yan-nhangu Dictionary Team, *Submission 30*, p. 2.

35   M Martin, *Committee Hansard*, Halls Creek, 1 May 2012, p. 17

36   L Jones, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 11; M Florey, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 February 2012, p. 8; Kaurna Warra Pintyandi group, *Submission 92*, p. 3; R Amery, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 2 April 2012, p. 3.

37   RNLD, *Submission 130*, p. 8.

38   K Olowsky, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 23.

39   RNLD, *Submission 130*, p. 8.

Indigenous language learning programs. For example, Mrs Nyoka (Nicky) Hatfield told the Committee about her work in teaching Darambal language and culture to children in schools across central Queensland. Mrs Hatfield reported that the teachers at the schools 'said that the Indigenous kids feel really special because it is their culture and their language that are being taught'.[40]

3.61   Similarly, the Committee heard about how the Mabu Yawaru Ngan-ga language centre was supporting the teaching of the Yawaru language in schools in the Broome area.[41] Ms Carmel Leahy from the centre reflected on the important benefits these activities held for local children:

> I feel that children having knowledge of their language and their culture makes them strong and resilient to face whatever life throws at them and that we really must support people when they want to give their children their language and culture.[42]

3.62   The above sample is a small selection of the outstanding work that is being undertaken across the country to maintain and revive Indigenous languages. It is clear that many individuals and organisations are devoting considerable time, effort, passion and expertise to keeping their languages and culture vibrant and strong. Some of these important activities are being financially supported by the ILS program.

Indigenous Languages Support

3.63   The Office for the Arts forms part of the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport and is the lead agency responsible for implementing the Commonwealth Government's National Indigenous Languages Policy. It administers the Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) program, which 'assists the maintenance, transmission and revival of Indigenous languages'.[43]

3.64   The ILS program is the only Commonwealth program that funds Indigenous languages programs and underpins the national Indigenous languages policy.

3.65   The ILS program aims to:

> address the erosion and loss of Australia's estimated 250 Indigenous languages by providing funding to support

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40   N Hatfield, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2011, p. 10.

41   Mabu Yawuru Ngan-ga, *Submission 147*, pp. 1-5; *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, pp. 1-9.

42   C Leahy, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 4.

43   Office for the Arts, *Submission 127*, p. 2.

community based projects by language groups, language research and coordination of language resources. [44]

3.66   The objectives of the program are:

- support the maintenance, revival, and development of Indigenous languages

- increase the use of Indigenous languages in a range of fields and media

- support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' engagement with their languages

- promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing by strengthening pride in identity and culture through languages, and

- promote public appreciation of Indigenous languages. [45]

3.67   Striking a balance between funding small, community-based language projects, and larger language or research institutions is a significant challenge for the ILS program. Ms Stacey Campton from the Office for the Arts commented that:

> Applications come from all over. We get them from the small community through to your large research centres like AIATSIS. We have, as you know, a small amount of money to run it nationally but we try and spread that money as best we can. [46]

3.68   ILS funding is directed towards supporting activities 'along the whole continuum of language use', rather than priorities being given to language revival or maintenance projects. [47] ILS funding is not distributed on a State/Territory basis, with the amount of funding allocated fluctuating 'from year to year as regional priorities change'. [48]

3.69   In practice, the success or failure of an ILS application is measured by the strength of an individual application against the published assessment criteria. The general assessment criteria for ILS applications for the 2012-13 funding round included separate criteria for applicants seeking annual and triennial funding.

3.70   Applicants seeking annual funding were assessed against the following criteria:

- The likely benefits of the proposed activity in the Indigenous culture, languages and visual arts areas.

44   Office for the Arts, *Submission 127*, p. 2.
45   Office for the Arts, *Submission 127a*, p. 2.
46   S Campton, Office for the Arts, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 22 March 2012, p. 3.
47   Office for the Arts, *Submission 127a*, p. 3.
48   Office for the Arts, *Submission 127a*, p. 3.

■ Ability to carry out the proposed activity, including the applicant's track record in relation to planning, governance and financial management.

■ Demonstrated need for funding, including provision of a realistic and sound budget for the year of proposed funding.[49]

3.71   Applicants seeking triennial funding were assessed against the following criteria:

■ Quality and relevance of the applicant's three-year strategic plan to the funding objectives of the relevant funding category. This includes the proposed activity's likely contribution to strengthening Indigenous culture, languages or visual arts.

■ Capacity of the applicant to fulfil the three-year strategic plan.

■ The applicant's ability to carry out the proposed activity to a high standard, including the applicant's track record in relation to planning, governance and financial management.

■ Demonstrated need for funding, including provision of a realistic and sound budget for the three years of proposed funding.[50]

3.72   In addition to the general assessment criteria, ILS applicants were assessed against 'demonstrated performance and commitment in the area of Indigenous languages and capacity to contribute to ILS objectives', including one or more of the following elements:

■ capacity to achieve outcomes for the maintenance, revival and/or development of Indigenous languages

■ capacity to support the innovative use of Indigenous languages in a new field or medium

■ ability to facilitate Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples' engagement with their languages

■ potential to increase public appreciation of Indigenous languages, and

■ engagement with other language organisations.[51]

3.73   There are substantial demands on the ILS program. The Office for the Arts reported that:

Each year, funding requests far exceed the total amount of funding available. In 2011-12, the program received 90 applications seeking approximately $14.5 million against the 2011-12 budget of $9.6 million. A total of 67 language activities, including 10 multi-year activities approved in previous funding rounds, are being supported in 2011-12. This includes activities such as community-

49   Office for the Arts, *Submission 127a*, p. 1.

50   Office for the Arts, *Submission 127a*, p. 1.

51   Office for the Arts, *Submission 127a*, p. 2.

run language centres and programs, research projects and resource development projects.[52]

3.74 According to Stacey Campton from the Office for the Arts, funding for language programs has remained at around $9 million for 15 years.[53] However, demand for funding has outpaced budget allocations since responsibility for administering the program was passed from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) to the Office for the Arts when ATSIC was abolished in 2005. In 2005-06, the budget for the MILR program was $8.5 million, with applications exceeding $17 million. In 2012-13, the budget for the ILS program is $9.9 million, with applications exceeding $21 million.[54]

3.75 Several witnesses expressed their concern about the level of funding available to support language activities through the ILS program. For example, the Mobile Language Team commented that:

> This has been the same figure for quite some years now, and it is a highly competitive grant application process, fought out between communities, all wanting to win a drop from a limited bucket of money, either on an annual or triennial basis. There is far more demand (and need) than there is money available. An increase in the total amount available from the federal government is well overdue.[55]

3.76 Similarly, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner was critical of the lack of new funding attached to the announcement of the National Indigenous languages policy. Describing the ILS program as 'the centrepiece of Indigenous language funding in Australia', the Commissioner pointed out that:

> This program has been in operation for a number of years and is now the sole source of funding for the Commonwealth's new National Approach. No new money has been added to the MILR (ILS) to meet the new obligations of the National Approach.[56]

3.77 Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) was concerned that a grant-based approach to the distribution of ILS funding 'favours better resourced applicants, and does not necessarily reflect a strategic or regional analysis of language requirements'.[57]

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52 Office for the Arts, *Submission 127*, p. 6.

53 S Campton, Office for the Arts, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 25 August 2011, p. 6.

54 Data supplied by the Office for the Arts, 11 September 2012.

55 Mobile Languages Team, *Submission 90*, p. 6.

56 Australian Human Rights Commission, *Social Justice Report 2009*, p. 68.

57 ANTaR, *Submission 23*, p. 8.

3.78   Other concerns were raised that successful applicants for ILS program
        funding were being subjected to increasingly onerous reporting
        requirements. For example, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) said
        that 'reporting periods have changed from year to year without obvious
        reason or explanation and with very short notice'.[58] The TAC noted that
        they were currently required to report every three months.

3.79   Similarly, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples said that 'for
        the small amount of funding received, the reporting is onerous on
        community programs and requires streamlining'.[59]

3.80   The Office for the Arts informed the Committee that ILS reporting
        requirements for funding recipients are consistent with the Department of
        Finance and Deregulation's *Commonwealth Grant Guidelines*, which
        establish the reporting framework for all departments and agencies.
        However, the ILS program reporting is designed to elicit information on
        how it contributes to whole-of-government objectives, including Closing
        the Gap.

3.81   The Office for the Arts stated:

> With regard to periodic reporting required of funding recipients,
> requirements are kept to the minimum. Funded organisations are
> provided with a simple template for performance reporting based
> on the agreed objectives and key outputs which are stated in the
> funding agreement and Project Officers are always available to
> discuss and/or assist with any difficulty a client may encounter
> with the reporting requirements or in completing the performance
> report template. Financial reporting is not onerous for an
> organisation with sound book-keeping and accounting
> procedures.[60]

3.82   In terms of the frequency of reporting, the Office for the Arts said that
        projects were assessed based on risk mitigation:

> Frequency of reporting is either quarterly or half-yearly,
> depending on the level of funding, degree of complexity of the
> funded project, the risk rating of the funded organisation and the
> ability of the Project Officer to visit the organisation in person and
> see how the activity is progressing.[61]

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58   TAC, *Submission 144*, p. 8.
59   National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, *Submission 139*, p. 139.
60   Office for the Arts, *Submission 127a*, p. 3.
61   Office for the Arts, *Submission 127a*, p. 4.

Committee comment

3.83   The Committee commends the great work that is being undertaken by individuals and communities across the nation to preserve and revive their Indigenous languages, often on a voluntary basis. The Committee acknowledges that much of these activities have limited resources and that there are few funding opportunities available.

3.84   The Committee is impressed particularly with work that is being done at the grassroots, community level. The Committee believes that community ownership of Indigenous language programs is essential for the successful maintenance and revival of Australia's Indigenous languages. Only communities can keep a language alive and strong. However, governments have a critical role in facilitating communities to achieve this.

3.85   It is clear to the Committee that, given the precarious position of many languages, long-term support is required to maintain record or retrieve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages for the benefit of the speakers of those languages, their descendants, and for the nation's heritage.

3.86   As the lead agency responsible for administering the National Indigenous Languages Policy and the ILS program, the Office for the Arts is oversubscribed and inadequately funded and levels of funding have been static since 2005-06. The Committee recognises that this equates to a decline in funding, in real terms, during a period in which demand for Indigenous languages support has increased substantially. This equates to a slow death by neglect for many Indigenous languages.

3.87   The Committee cannot reconcile the statement made by the national policy under its 'actions' that greater attention and support is being provided for Indigenous languages, when funding for language projects has declined effectively in real terms. The Committee calls the Commonwealth Government to account and urges it to include a substantially greater allocation of funding for the ILS program.

3.88   The Committee is of the view that a greater allocation of funding for the ILS program will have substantial positive impacts on Closing the Gap targets, through promoting intergenerational connection to culture and community wellbeing, the preservation of heritage, and education and employment outcomes. A well supported ILS program will have positive benefits in Indigenous community capacity building and developing a greater sense of community responsibility for the wellbeing of future generations.

3.89   The Committee considers that stringent reporting requirements for ILS funding recipients are appropriate and are consistent with finance regulations.

Recommendation 5 - Increased funding for Indigenous Languages Support

3.90   **The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government substantially increase ongoing funding for the Indigenous Languages Support program in the 2013-14 Budget.**

Support for Torres Strait Islander languages

3.91   Another issue that was raised in relation to the ILS program was that people and organisations who are working with languages in the Torres Strait are ineligible to apply for ILS funding. Ms Campton said that the Office for the Arts funds Torres Strait language programs that are based on the mainland, but are unable to extend that funding to those based on the islands in the Torres Strait.[62]

3.92   According to the Office for the Arts, the ineligibility of Torres Strait language programs is a legacy of when support for Indigenous languages was administered by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). Stacey Campton stated that 'when ATSIC was shut down, the money for the Torres Strait went directly to the Torres Strait Regional Authority for language, culture and broadcasting'.[63]

3.93   Sally Basser from the Office for the Arts described this as an 'administrative arrangement' in which 'the Torres Strait Regional Authority was retained so the Australian government funding for the Torres Strait still goes through the Torres Strait Regional Authority'.[64]

3.94   Ned David, the Chair of the Torres Strait Islander Regional Education Council, described this method of apportioning funds for language programs in the Torres Strait as 'extremely ineffective'.[65]

3.95   The Torres Strait Regional Authorigy (TSRA) responded by saying that:

> Through its modest budget appropriation, the TSRA (has) supported and encouraged traditional language use and learning

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62   S Campton, Office for the Arts, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 25 August 2011, p. 6.

63   S Campton, Office for the Arts, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 25 August 2011, p. 7.

64   S Basser, Office for the Arts, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 22 March 2012, p. 6.

65   N David, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 25 August 2011, p. 7.

across the Torres Strait region through open and transparent grant application and selection processes.[66]

3.96 The TSRA clarified that its grants are not directed solely towards language projects:

> The range of cultural activities supported by TSRA not only focuses on languages, but includes a range of projects that focus on traditional song, storytelling, visual arts and traditional dance.[67]

Committee comment

3.97 The Committee recognises that the present mechanism for the allocation of funding for language-related activities in the Torres Strait is not ideal and is a legacy of the dismantlement of ATSIC. However, the Committee understands that the TSRA has limited funding available to support these activities.

3.98 The Committee considers that Torres Strait Islander language programs should be considered in ILS funding allocations.

Recommendation 6 - Torres Strait Islander funding eligibility

3.99 **The Committee recommends that the Minister for the Arts amend the guidelines for the Indigenous Languages Support program to allow Torres Strait Islander applications to be considered for funding.**

Deductible Gift Recipient eligibility

3.100 Opportunities exist for organisations that are working with Indigenous languages to obtain funding through charitable donations. However, at present these opportunities are limited because these organisations are unable to offer potential donors the incentive of a tax deduction for their donations through being categorised as Deductible Gift Recipients (DGR's).

3.101 Several people gave evidence that language centres are unable to access philanthropic support through DGR eligibility. Mr Daryn McKenny from the Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre said that due to current DGR arrangements, his organisation:

> have had to turn away the corporate social responsibility managers—I think that is the term—for Telstra and for Westpac. It

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66 TSRA, *Submission 146*, p. 1.
67 TSRA, *Submission 146*, p. 2.

is absolutely crazy that we have had to turn them away because the answer to whether we have deductible gift recipient status is no. We cannot achieve that because of the Australian taxation and the antiquated legislation which exists there does not acknowledge language. It has separated us out.[68]

3.102   Similarly, Australian National University linguist Greg Dickson said that:

This is unfortunate and seemingly unfair as comparable non-profit organisations such as Aboriginal Art Centres easily meet the criteria of the Register of Cultural Organisations. Language Centres potentially miss out on significant private donations and grant opportunities due to being unable to obtain DGR status.[69]

3.103   John Hobson from the University of Sydney's Koori Centre agreed, and added that:

Tax-deductible status for Indigenous languages organisations should not just be considered; it should be granted as soon as possible to allow for a philanthropic funding stream to supplement the need for government funds.[70]

3.104   The Register of Cultural Organisations (ROCO) was established to allow qualifying cultural organisations to be categorised as DGR's. In order to be eligible to be entered onto the ROCO, an applicant must show that they are a 'cultural organisation' as provided by the meaning set out in under Subdivision 30-F of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997* (the Act).

3.105   The ROCO is currently by the Office for the Arts and is one of only four DGR categories that are not administered by the ATO. The ATO already has responsibility for 43 other general DGR categories.

3.106   According to correspondence the Committee received from the Office for the Arts, there have been discussions at various times about expanding the 'principal purpose' provision [s30-300(2)] of the meaning of 'cultural organisation' in the legislation to reflect a broader understanding of 'culture'. Activities that do not meet the current provision but are generally understood to be cultural include:

■   recording of Indigenous languages

■   Indigenous culture

■   teaching or study of languages more generally, and

■   promoting historic and other cultural heritage.

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68   D McKenny, *Committee Hansard*, Newcastle, 9 September 2011, p. 13.

69   G Dickson, *Submission 125*, p. 13.

70   Koori Centre, University of Sydney, *Submission 7*, p. 8.

3.107   These issues were examined in the 2011 Review of Private Sector Support for the Arts, which was undertaken by Mr Harold Mitchell AC and commissioned by the Minister for the Arts.

3.108   The review recommended that the:

■ guidelines for the ROCO be amended to 'improve the definition of 'cultural' to encompass Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages', and

■ responsibility for administering the ROCO be transferred 'to the Australian Taxation Office, with administration to be streamlined in line with other deductible gift recipient categories. The Office for the Arts will retain an advisory role'.[71]

3.109   The Commonwealth Government is formulating its response to the Harold Mitchell review.[72]

3.110   Another avenue for recognition as a DGR for Indigenous language organisations is via classification as a Public Benevolent Institution (PBI) by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). According to the ATO, characteristics of a PBI are that

■ it is set up for needs that require benevolent relief
■ it relieves those needs by directly providing services to people suffering from them
■ it is carried on for the public benefit
■ it is non-profit
■ it is an institution, and
■ its dominant purpose is providing benevolent relief.[73]

3.111   The Victorian Aboriginal Centre for Languages (VACL) reported to the Committee the benefits of recognition as a PBI:

> Most recently, VACL was recognised by the Australian Tax Office as a Public Benevolent Institution which not only allows additional benefits to staff and makes VACL a more attractive employer, but also allows VACL to access a wide range of philanthropic funds and trusts to expand its programs and activities.[74]

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71   Harold Mitchell AC, *Building Support: Report of the Review of Private Sector Support for the Arts in Australia*, 2011, p. 8.

72   M Gordon, Cultural Property and Gifts, Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport, *Committee Correspondence*, 8 June 2012.

73   Australian Taxation Office, 'Is your organisation a public benevolent institution?' <www.ato.gov.au/nonprofit/content.aspx?menuid=1445&doc=/content/26553 .htm&page=2#P7_396> accessed 13 June 2012.

74   VACL, *Submission 152*, p. 1.

3.112   However, other language centres have been unable to obtain DGR status as a PBI. Mr Daryn McKenny, General Manager of the Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre in Newcastle, told the Committee that his centre had been refused DGR status both through the ROCO and as a PBI. Mr McKenny said that:

> The Australian Tax Office with today's legislation will not allow us as a language centre to receive public benevolent institution status or let us register under the register of cultural organisations because language is not recognised within that legislation.[75]

3.113   Mr Paul Paton from VACL said that he had shared the lessons learnt from VACL's successful application with Mr McKenny. However this knowledge-sharing did not aid Mr McKenny's PBI application:

> Our success is based on public benevolence and instilling a sense of pride in individuals and communities. I shared all that information. We could only put that unsuccessful application down to perhaps the individual who was assessing it, because mine was assessed in Melbourne, and Newcastle's was assessed in Perth. It may be an individual interpretation of the act as to whether languages are a contributor towards self-esteem and individual pride.[76]

Committee comment

3.114   The Committee is of the view that inherently Indigenous language related activities are cultural activities and that organisations carrying out Indigenous language-related work should be considered to be cultural organisations.

3.115   As such, the Committee strongly supports the changes to the ROCO as recommended by the Mitchell review. These changes will enable Indigenous language organisations to access philanthropic and other revenue streams by being classified as cultural organisations under the ROCO. The Committee views this to be a more appropriate pathway to DGR status than making changes to ATO guidelines relating to the categorisation of PBI's.

3.116   In doing this, the Commonwealth Government will relieve some funding pressure and enable funding flows to language centres from the philanthropic sector. This will provide greater recognition of the heritage and living value of Indigenous languages to all Australians.

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75   D McKenny, *Committee Hansard*, Newcastle, 9 September 2011, p. 12.

76   P Paton, VACL, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 24 May 2012, p. 8.

Recommendation 7 - Deductible Gift Recipient eligibility

3.117 **The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government immediately amend the criteria for an organisation to be entered on the Register of Cultural Organisations to include a provision for Indigenous language-related projects to be endorsed as a Deductable Gift Recipient by the Australian Taxation Office.**

Constitutional recognition of Indigenous languages

3.118 A significant number of submissions to this inquiry supported the formal recognition of Australia's Indigenous languages in the Constitution. This recognition was a recommendation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner in his 2009 *Social Justice Report*.[77]

3.119 The Commissioner recommended that the Government:

> Commence a process to recognise Indigenous languages in the preamble of Australia's Constitution with a view to recognising Indigenous languages in the body of the Constitution in future.[78]

3.120 In December 2010, the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians (the Panel) was tasked to report to the Government on possible options for constitutional change to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and their continuing cultures, languages and heritage. The Panel sought advice as to the level of support from Indigenous people and the wider community for these options.

3.121 The Panel conducted a broad national consultation between May and October 2011. Upon presenting its final report in January 2012, the Panel recommended the following change to the Constitution:

> That a new 'section 127A' be inserted, along the following lines:
> Section 127A Recognition of languages
>
> (1) The national language of the Commonwealth of Australia is English.
>
> (2) The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are the original Australian languages, a part of our national heritage.[79]

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77 S Loong, *Submission 85*, p. 1; ANTaR, *Submission 23*, p. 10; Australian Linguistic Society, *Submission 104*, p. 1; S Disbray, *Submission 126*, p. 2; New South Wales Department of Education and Communities, *Submission 59*, p. 25; RNLD, *Submission 130*, p. 11.

78 Australian Human Rights Commission, *Social Justice Report 2009*, p. 105

3.122   While the weight of evidence supported constitutional recognition of Indigenous languages, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) urged for legislative changes and increased funding instead. They did not support constitutional recognition, and said that it:

> would not provide any effective mechanism for strengthening languages and would be purely tokenistic. Such a recognition would not impose any duty or obligation on the Commonwealth or any other government in Australia. It would not impose a duty to legislate to protect languages. Nor would it create a right of funding for those attempting to preserve languages.[80]

Committee comment

3.123   The Committee supports the recommendation of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages be recognised in the Constitution as Australia's first languages.

3.124   The Committee is of the view that constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians, and their unique cultures, languages and heritage is an important step forward for the nation as a whole.

Recommendation 8 - Constitutional recognition of Indigenous languages

3.125   **The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government support Constitutional changes to include the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, as recommended by the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition for Indigenous Australians.**

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

3.126   The importance of Indigenous languages is recognised in a range of international human rights instruments. These instruments acknowledge the importance of individuals and their rights as part of the international legal framework.

3.127   The most notable instrument is Article 13 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which provides that:

> Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral

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79   Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians, *Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Constitution: Report of the Expert Panel*, 2012, p. xvii.

80   TAC, *Submission 144*, p. 5.

traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that this right is protected and also to ensure that Indigenous peoples can understand and be understood in political, legal and administrative proceedings, where necessary through the provision of interpretation or by other appropriate means.[81]

3.128 Article 14(1) of the Declaration provides for educational autonomy of Indigenous peoples. It affords Indigenous peoples the right to:

establish and control their education systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.[82]

3.129 Further, Article 31 of the Declaration recognises the right of Indigenous peoples to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.[83]

3.130 The Commonwealth Government formally endorsed the Declaration in April 2009, although as ANTaR highlighted, it has not developed a national implementation strategy.[84]

Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

3.131 The principles set out in Article 31 of the Declaration are paralleled to some extent in the Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Convention is the key instrument within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) cultural heritage program, and was introduced in response to perceived inadequacies in the World Heritage Convention and other related instruments, which focus on immovable property (such as monuments or natural sites) or movable tangible property (such as tools, weapons and ceremonial objects).

3.132 According to the Convention, Indigenous languages are a 'vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage', which include:

the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces

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81   United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 13.
82   United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 14(1).
83   United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 31.
84   ANTaR, *Submission 23*, p. 5.

> associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some
> cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.[85]

3.133   As such, the Convention recognises that the preservation of Indigenous
languages is fundamental to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

3.134   A significant number of submissions supported Australia's ratification of
the Convention.[86]

3.135   ANTaR noted that Australia has not ratified the Convention and supports
the Commonwealth Government taking appropriate steps to become a
party to the agreement. However ANTaR also said that:

> Given the broad definition of intangible cultural heritage within
> the Convention, we do recognise that Australia's ratification of the
> Convention has implications (and we would posit, potential
> benefits) which extend beyond the strict terms of reference of the
> Inquiry. Accordingly, a separate consultation process to consider
> Australia's ratification of the Convention may be prudent, and
> perhaps timely, in light of the significant work being undertaken
> in relation to language revitalisation, and the release of the
> proposed new National Cultural Policy in 2012.[87]

Committee comment

3.136   The Committee notes that Indigenous languages are recognised in a range
of international human rights instruments. Further, the Committee
recognises the importance of these instruments as part of the international
legal framework.

3.137   The Committee observes that the Commonwealth Government formally
endorsed the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2009. The
Committee encourages the Commonwealth Government to develop an
implementation plan to give effect to its endorsement of the Declaration.

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85   *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention for the
Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, done at Paris, 17 October 2003, Article 2.

86   ANTaR, *Submission 23a*, p. 5; TAC, *Submission 144*, p. 1; RNLD, *Submission 130*, p. 8; Aboriginal
Resource and Development Services (ARDS), *Submission 74*, p. 14; New South Wales
Department of Education and Communities, *Submission 59*, p. 25.

87   ANTaR, *Submission 23a*, p. 5.

Recommendation 9 - United Nations declaration implementation plan

3.138   **The Committee recommends that by March 2013 the Commonwealth Government develop and announce an implementation plan given its endorsement of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2009.**

3.139   The Committee notes that the Commonwealth Government's ratification of the Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage extends beyond the terms of reference for the present inquiry. However, the Committee sees merit in a review being conducted.

Recommendation 10 - Convention ratification review

3.140   **The Committee recommends that, given Australia has not yet ratified the Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Commonwealth Government conduct a review of the potential benefits and implications of its ratification.**

4

Learning Indigenous languages and Standard Australian English

4.1 This chapter examines the value of incorporating Indigenous languages in education. It analyses the potential to improve partnerships between schools and Indigenous communities through Indigenous language learning in schools. In particular, school attendance rates and improved continuous engagement with the education system are discussed.

4.2 The chapter focuses on the advantages of including Indigenous languages in early education. The benefits of language nests are considered as well as the role that family and childcare centres play in preparing children for school, especially in remote locations where English is not commonly spoken. The Committee discusses how achieving English language competency is improved by teaching in Indigenous languages from a child's first years in schooling.

4.3 The Australian Curriculum is reviewed to assess how Indigenous language and culture is being incorporated within the new Australian Curriculum that is currently being implemented throughout Australia.

4.4 Various styles of teaching for Indigenous students including learning English as an Additional Language/Dialect and bilingual education are discussed. Educational benefits of ensuring English language competency are examined by the Committee as are numeracy and literacy assessments.

Building partnerships between schools and Indigenous communities

4.5 Building and improving partnerships between schools and Indigenous communities was highlighted as a positive way to improve educational

outcomes for Indigenous students. The potential benefits were great including improving school attendance, engagement and learning outcomes for Indigenous students.

4.6   This is an area that the Committee discussed in its previous report tabled in 2011, *Doing Time - Time for Doing, Indigenous Youth in the Criminal Justice System.* In the previous report the Committee recommended a number of ways for schools and Indigenous communities to build partnerships together, including engaging the local Indigenous community to teach language and culture afterschool and provide extra curricula activities.[1]

4.7   The Committee received evidence from the Queensland Department of Education and Training about an *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Statement* it has developed. The object of the *Languages Statement* aims to facilitate the connection between schools and Indigenous communities:

> The DET Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Statement provides the basis to assist Queensland educators and school communities to support the languages and cultures of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within the school context.[2]

4.8   The Department of Education and Training, Queensland, highlighted the importance of developing relationships between school and communities. In the submission it stated:

> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages need to be recognised, valued and supported in schools, and in developing relationships with families and communities. Initiatives that develop culture and language have been found to be significant factors in increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' participation, attendance and achievements in schools.[3]

4.9   The New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education and Communities noted a similar sentiment in its submission:

> The NSW Department of Education and Communities believes that good education practice values and incorporates the knowledge, understandings and perspectives of Aboriginal

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1   House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Doing Time – Time for Doing, Indigenous Youth in the Criminal Justice System,* 2011, p. 135.

2   Queensland Government Department of Education and Training (Queensland DET), *Submission 109*, p. 14.

3   Queensland DET, *Submission 109*, p. 7.

> students, their families and communities and focuses on
> engagement, collaboration and participation. Not only are
> national, state and local perspectives important in learning, but so
> too are the historical, social and cultural contexts and backgrounds
> of the peoples and communities involved in learning. Aboriginal
> languages, as do all languages, give voice to the heart and soul of
> culture.[4]

4.10   The Chief Executive, Greg Barnes, Department of Education and Training, Northern Territory, discussed with the Committee the importance of Indigenous community engagement and provided an example of a community that has demonstrated excellent community engagement as a result of building strong partnerships:

> ...you have to have the community coming with and along side of
> you. ... the school needs to work with the community and not the
> other way around. The community should be driving the show.
> When you get them onboard and owning things, places like
> Gunbalanya, Galiwinku and some of the communities on Groote
> now are getting enormous rollups of the community in the three-
> to-nine program. We have the community engaged in learning. If
> the community engages in learning then the modelling for the kids
> is amazing.[5]

4.11   The Australian Council of TESOL (ACTA) submission emphasised the point that schools and communities should work in partnerships with one another:

> Community leaders and parents will continue to be primary
> agents for teaching traditional culture/s and language/s to their
> children. Schools and communities should work in partnership
> with their communities to perpetuate, grow and celebrate
> culture/s and language/s, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait
> creoles and varieties of Aboriginal English which are students'
> home languages.[6]

4.12   Lola Jones, representing the Western Australian Department of Education, discussed the importance of including Indigenous languages into schools in order to engage Indigenous communities. She commented that the benefits can be not only useful for engaging Indigenous students but beneficial for engaging the Indigenous community in language revival:

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4   New South Wales Department of Education and Communities, *Submission 59*, p. 8.

5   G Barnes, *Committee Hansard,* Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 6

6   The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA), *Submission 72*, p. 27.

> Having language in schools is such a small part of language revival, and in Western Australia it has been a small part but sometimes it has been the key to getting whole communities involved in language revival.[7]

Engaging students in education

4.13   The Committee heard from various teachers and educational experts on the benefits that can be demonstrated by supporting Indigenous language learning in schools. The self esteem of young Indigenous students is boosted when Indigenous languages are incorporated into the school curriculum. The inclusion of language in the curricula from kindergarten or preschool through to year 12 was discussed as an effective way of engaging Indigenous students.

4.14   Barbara McGillivray, chair of the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and Culture Aboriginal Corporation (FATSILC), emphasised the importance that 'languages be part of the curriculum being taught in the schools from kindy all the way through.'[8]

4.15   Coco Yu, a language teacher in Broome provided the Committee with an example of how the inclusion of Indigenous language learning supported a student's confidence and self-esteem:

> I teach from pre-primary to year 2 at the moment at my school. Next year it will continue to year 3 and will carry on like that. Last year in year 1, I had a very shy girl who would not speak in front of the class. She is a Yawuru child although English is her first language. She would not get up and speak in front of the class, but one day we were playing Yawuru bingo in the class and she won. I was so surprised. I thought, well, come on up and say this word. And she did. She was very proud. She practically ran up and grabbed the key word picture and said 'gugu' meaning dad or father. At that stage, I was on the verge of thinking this was too hard but she got up there and was so excited to speak in front of the whole class. I realised that, yes, this is important and we must keep doing it.[9]

4.16   A similar story was told about a year six child at a school in Queensland who was known to have behavioural difficulties. In a submission to the

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7   L Jones, Western Australian Department of Education, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 9.

8   B McGillivray, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 19.

9   C Yu, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 3.

Committee, Nyoka Hatfield, an Indigenous language and culture teacher, described the positive effect her Indigenous language and culture class has on this child:

> ... after one of my very first year six classes, a teacher that accompanied the students said that it had been a very long time since he had seen a particular student sit quietly and listen for an entire lesson. This student had behaviour problems and I don't know if he was indigenous or not, but he ended up being one of my leaders when we sometimes performed for the entire school.[10]

4.17   Another example demonstrated how Indigenous language and culture classes could engage students' interests in secondary education. Ms Hatfield described the following situation:

> In 2009 at one of the high schools that I visited, my first class were the Indigenous year eights, these students then had a Japanese language class to attend (it was compulsory for them), while my next class, were the Indigenous year nines. The year eights were practically begging the Indigenous school worker to let them miss the Japanese class and stay with me. I explained to the students that I would just be repeating what I had already told them, but they said that it didn't matter, they would rather stay with me and were very disappointed when they weren't allowed.[11]

4.18   For the children to feel connected to school, the inclusion of their home language at school can be important for them to understand the link between the world they live in at home and learning English. Teachers from Yirrkala school made this point during a public hearing:

> The children come to school already with a great deal of knowledge about their world, culture and language. That is what they bring because they have a language that they bring to school and it helps them to unpack what they learn at school.[12]

School attendance

4.19   The Committee received evidence that demonstrated positive links between incorporating Indigenous languages into schools and improvements in school attendance rates. However the point was stressed

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10   N Hatfield, *Submission 63,* p. 2.

11   N Hatfield, *Submission 63,* p. 3.

12   B Ganambarr, *Committee Hansard,* Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 10.

that incorporating Indigenous language into schools was not the silver bullet to improve school attendance rates per se.

4.20   Studies carried out in Queensland and New South Wales indicated that the inclusion of Indigenous language learning at school did lead to an increase in school attendance:

> Supporting the inclusion of Indigenous languages can increase the access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to and participation in kindergarten and other early childhood education and care programs. In Queensland between 2008 and 2010 overall Indigenous children's kindergarten participation increased by 6 percent to 35 percent.[13]

> In NSW, using and learning Aboriginal languages has been associated with increased school attendance rates among Aboriginal students, improved academic performance, particularly in levels of literacy, and a heightened sense of self-worth. For Aboriginal students, learning an Aboriginal language can strongly motivate students, promoting a sense of pride and direction.[14]

4.21   Anecdotal evidence gathered by the Committee suggested that including Indigenous languages in schools lifted school attendance rates. One Arm Point School in Western Australia was provided as an example of improving attendance rates and educational outcomes:

> ...[T}he former principal, Mr Steven Price, has been instrumental in improving student attendance and educational outcomes in language by focusing on systematic language teaching and respect for three languages in the school (Bardi, Aboriginal English, and Standard Australian English). This program has continued with the current principal.[15]

4.22   Lola Jones from the Kimberley Education Office, Western Australia supported the view that a culturally relevant school environment assisted with increasing attendance rates:

> I cannot really talk about attendance data, but some principals have commented to me that 'We did nothing else last semester that was different. The only thing we did was introduce an Aboriginal

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13   Queensland DET, *Submission 109*, p. 7.
14   New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Education and Communities, *Submission 98*, p. 3.
15   C Bowern, *Submission 83*, p. 3.

> language, and our suspensions have dropped and our attendance
> is up.' That is anecdotal but that is strong, and parents who say, 'I
> had a choice and I could enrol my kid at school A or school B but I
> enrolled in that school B because I know they teach an Aboriginal
> language.[16]

4.23   In Darwin, Gary Barnes discussed the complex nature of School
        attendance. He commented:

> School attendance is a multifaceted and very interesting
> phenomenon. You can have the best education programs running
> that are culturally responsive, appropriate and grow culture, but if
> the kids are not in the schools—and often they are not in the
> schools because they are not in the communities but off doing a
> range of other things...[17]

4.24   Dr Brian Devlin, provided the Committee with some figures on
        attendance rates during the 1980s when there was a bilingual program
        running at Shepardson College, Northern Territory:

> I can certify that during my time as principal at Shepherdson
> College, attendance was 82 percent on average and in some
> classes, for example, John Greatorex's year 6 class, attendance was
> consistently above 90 percent.[18]

4.25   Greg Dickson, an academic from the Australian National University,
        noted in his submission:

> Sadly, evidence shows that Lajamanu School has suffered since its
> bilingual education program was removed in 2009 under the First
> Four Hours policy. Attendance figures have barely risen above
> 45% since mid-2009, down from 60% (and above) between 2006-
> 2008.[19]

4.26   One of the most alarming statistics received in relation to school
        attendance demonstrated the magnitude of the problem of continuously
        low attendance rates:

> Missing school for one day a week was calculated, by the Western
> Australian Office of the Auditor General, as being equivalent, on

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16   L Jones, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 10.
17   G Barnes, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 5.
18   B Devlin, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 54.
19   G Dickson, *Submission 125*, p. 7.

average, to missing two years of schooling over a ten year
education.[20]

Committee comment

4.27   The Committee believes that fostering Indigenous community
        engagement is a critical factor for schools that have low Indigenous
        attendance and retention rates. The Committee understands that
        Indigenous languages can be part of the solution to assist in forming
        partnerships between schools and Indigenous communities.

4.28   Indigenous languages can be used within the school to help promote
        awareness of the local community languages. The incorporation of
        Indigenous languages into the school environment promotes recognition
        and pride for Indigenous students and their families. It may help students
        forge connections between Indigenous and non Indigenous worlds, and so
        provide them with the skills to succeed in both.

4.29   The Committee urges state and territory governments to continue to
        support strategies that focus on building Indigenous community
        partnerships with schools and recognise the importance of Indigenous
        languages within these partnerships.

4.30   The Committee is of the firm belief that language and culture learning
        should be integrated into school learning however it notes that children
        undertake some of their greatest learning before they reach school age.
        Further, children are constantly learning and absorbing language in the
        household, in the backyard and within the community. Therefore the
        Committee encourages families and elders to work together, before
        children reach school age and outside of school hours to continue the
        teaching of Indigenous languages.

4.31   The Committee believes that communities are the first teachers of children
        but it is important for governments to work in partnership to raise healthy
        children, who are strong in their first language. Indigenous communities
        must assist in working proactively with schools to develop a suitable way
        forward to incorporate language learning with their local school.

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20   New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Education and
     Communities, *Submission 98*, p. 11.

State/Territory curricula

4.32   Several states and territories have included Indigenous languages in their curricula at different levels. The following section provides an overview of some of these Indigenous language components for some states and territories.

Queensland curriculum

4.33   The Committee received the following evidence in relation to the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in the Queensland syllabus. At a public hearing in Brisbane the Committee was informed:

> Very recently the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) developed two syllabus documents. The Queensland Studies Authority has responsibility for creating the syllabus for both state and non-state Queensland schools. QSA has created the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander syllabus, P-10—that is, from prep through to year 10—and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages: trial senior syllabus 2011, which is currently being trialled in the senior schools. This means that Queensland state schools can now teach traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages as a language other than English, or LOTE. LOTE will become mandatory for all schools in 2012. The local school, along with the community, will decide what approach to take with that, but they will be required to teach a language other than English as part of their curriculum offerings, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages is an option for those schools to fulfil that requirement.[21]

4.34   The Queensland Department of Education and Training submission detailed one of the ways this syllabus was being supported:

> DET is supporting Queensland state schools to implement the syllabus and is in the process of developing support guidelines for Principals and is investigating other modes of support for implementation of the syllabus.[22]

4.35   Within the Torres Strait, traditional languages are taught in both primary and secondary school classes, The TSRA understands that qualified

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21   Queensland DET, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2011, pp. 1-2.
22   Queensland DET, *Submission 109*, p. 15.

linguists and language speakers are employed by Education Queensland to provide these classes.[23]

4.36   As discussed in the previous section the DET Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Statement provides the basis to assist Queensland educators and school communities to support the languages and cultures of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within the school context.[24]

New South Wales curriculum and other language support

4.37   The New South Wales (NSW) Aboriginal Languages K-12 Syllabus commenced in 2005 and has been developed in conjunction with the Aboriginal owners and custodians of each of the languages offered. The syllabus supports sequential learning and covers linguistic features of Aboriginal languages, grammatical structures, listening, reading, writing and speaking in an Aboriginal language, and an understanding of Aboriginal heritage and contemporary culture.

4.38   In its submission the Department of Aboriginal Affairs highlighted the figures for the number of students currently studying 13 Indigenous languages:

> In NSW in 2010, 7986 students, 1571 Aboriginal and 6415 non-Aboriginal students, undertook study in one of the 13 Aboriginal languages offered at one of 36 public schools. At TAFE, Certificate 1, 2 and 3 is offered in an Aboriginal language. The course commenced in 2007, and by 2011 532 students had undertaken one of these courses.[25]

4.39   The NSW *2021 Plan*, a ten year plan, recognises that Aboriginal people are disadvantaged across almost every social indicator and incorporates Aboriginal specific targets across all relevant goals.

4.40   Within the NSW *2021 Plan*, the following goals specifically impact on the teaching of Aboriginal languages:

- Goal 15: Improve education and learning outcomes for all students includes the Aboriginal specific target: Halving the gap between NSW Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in reading and numeracy by 2018; and

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23   Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), *Submission 146,* p. 9.

24   Queensland DET, *Submission 109*, p. 14.

25   New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Education and Community, *Submission 98*, p. 17.

- Goal 26: Fostering opportunity and partnerships with Aboriginal People, establishes that a reinvigorated Aboriginal affairs strategy will be developed in conjunction with Aboriginal people, through a real and meaningful partnership.[26]

4.41 Alongside the *NSW 2021 Plan* the NSW Government established a NSW *Aboriginal Languages Policy* in 2004. A five year *Aboriginal Languages Strategic Plan 2006-10* was developed after lengthy consultations with Aboriginal communities, and recognised the critical role of educational sector to the reclamation of Aboriginal languages. One of the four key result areas was Aboriginal Languages in the educational sector.

4.42 Through the Strategic Plan, Aboriginal Affairs NSW, has contributed more than $1.4 million since 2005 to 78 community based language projects through the Aboriginal Languages Research and Resource Centre.

4.43 The NSW Government's Aboriginal Education and Training Policy commits to the teaching of Aboriginal languages, Aboriginal studies and Aboriginal cross curriculum content. The Policy acknowledges the strength, diversity, ownership and richness of Aboriginal cultures, and custodianship of country are respected, valued and promoted. The Policy outlines the incorporation of cultural contexts, values and practices of local Aboriginal communities into the mainstream delivery of education and training.[27]

Northern Territory curriculum

4.44 The Committee held a public hearing in Darwin and spoke with Northern Territory Minister Malarndirri McCarthy and other government representatives about the languages inquiry. Minister McCarthy informed the Committee that the Northern Territory was offering comprehensive Indigenous language curricula:

> The Indigenous languages and culture curriculum is found in the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework, the NTCF, including language maintenance and language revitalisation programs. The Northern Territory is the only Australian jurisdiction offering comprehensive Indigenous language curricula of this type. Under the new policy, each school can determine what the priority of

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26 New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Education and Community, *Submission 98*, p. 15.
27 New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Education and Community, *Submission 98*, p. 17.

language learning is for the school and, in consultation with the community and the school, this can be achieved.[28]

4.45   In relation to the Indigenous studies programs, DET continues to report against achievement of the Territory 2030 strategy requirement which states that:

> By 2020 all Territory students will demonstrate achievement in Indigenous studies.' The Northern Territory's Indigenous studies modules, history and identity, support teachers to deliver these programs. Schools record Indigenous studies achievement data in a common repository.[29]

4.46   Details of the Northern Territory language and culture programs were provided to the Committee:

> In 2011, 60 government schools in the Northern Territory offered Indigenous language and culture programs of which there were 26 first language maintenance programs, seven to nine language revitalisation programs, 11 language renewal programs, 11 second language learning programs and two language awareness programs.

> There are nine schools that received additional resources to deliver two-way or step programs offering home language learning programs and they are Areyonga, Lajamanu, Maningrida, Milingimbi, Numbulwar, Shepherdson College, Willowra, Yirrkala, and Yuendumu. How often Indigenous language and culture programs are taught varies from school to school, but weekly programs of three to four hours is the average.[30]

4.47   The Northern Territory Government has established an Indigenous Advisory Affairs Council (IAAC), which is a council made up of 16 to 18 members who are representative of the Northern Territory. The IAAC are providing advice to the Minister on developing a language policy which is yet to be completed. The Committee was informed of the IAAC vision:

> By 2030, all Territorians will celebrate the diversity of our languages and cultures. We will walk and talk together in two worlds to achieve a healthy society which values respect, harmony and wellbeing.[31]

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28   M McCarthy, *Committee Hansard,* Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 2.
29   M McCarthy, *Committee Hansard,* Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 2.
30   M McCarthy, *Committee Hansard,* Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 2.
31   M McCarthy, *Committee Hansard,* Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 8.

4.48   The Committee asked the Minister to comment on the significant amount of criticism regarding the Northern Territory's four hours of explicit English teaching policy that had been raised in many submissions. Minister McCarthy responded by commenting that her Government:

> ...have always maintained that Indigenous languages are essential in the Northern Territory to maintaining and looking at the revitalisation and the learning of languages. The decision that was taken to go to four hours English was focused on the clear fact that English was not being learnt, and the unfortunate side effect of that decision was that it was seen as a clear attack on language, which was certainly not the intent.[32]

4.49   The Committee discusses the Northern Territory's four hours of explicit English teaching policy further in the latter part of this chapter under the section titled learning in first language.

4.50   Mr Barnes, CEO of the Northern Territory DET commented on the number of schools in remote locations in the Northern Territory:

> We have got approximately 76 very remote schools for whom English is a second, third or fourth language, and in the vast majority of those schools—well over 70 of those—there is a form of bilingual education happening.[33]

Western Australia curriculum

4.51   There has been a continuous and increasing presence of Aboriginal languages being taught in Western Australia public schools since 1992. Aboriginal languages have been part of the list of priority languages as part of the Western Australia (WA) Department of Education and Training LOTE (Languages Other Than English) Strategy. Aboriginal Languages are embedded as part of the Languages Learning Area.

4.52   The key goal for Aboriginal languages in Western Australian Department of Education is to:

■ increase the levels of student achievement and participation rates in Aboriginal Languages Education

32   M McCarthy, *Committee Hansard,* Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 3.

33   G Barnes, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 14.

- maintain a critical pool of highly skilled Aboriginal language teachers providing quality sustainable language programs in Department of Education schools.[34]

4.53   The teaching of Aboriginal languages is a cooperative effort between the school and the Aboriginal community. The language (or languages) taught in the school and the language speakers are negotiated with the local Aboriginal community. A steady number of Aboriginal staff and some community members, who are language speakers, are undertaking the Aboriginal Languages Teacher Training course provided by the Department. These people graduate as qualified Aboriginal languages teachers with the skills to teach their language in a school environment.

4.54   In 2011 there were twenty Aboriginal languages being taught in fifty Western Australian public schools in remote, urban, rural and metropolitan areas to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. There were fifty-five Aboriginal Languages teachers and eight elders are teaching language to 7,246 students in Years K-12.[35]

4.55   In Broome, the Committee was told about several schools in Western Australia that offer Indigenous language courses through to Year 10, 11 and 12:

> We have currently got one school where they have got the year 11 and 12 course of study run through the curriculum council. I am not sure of the numbers that have gone right through, but we have got another school in the Goldfields that is currently bringing on year 10s and then next year they will extend that to the year 11s and 12s. I know of a couple of people who have been through the year 11 and 12 course of study who have actually then looked at becoming trainee language teachers—it is that full circle.[36]

Australian Curriculum

4.56   The Australian Curriculum is in the process of being developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in collaboration with a range of key stakeholders, communities and individuals. The aim of the Australian Curriculum is to ensure consistency of curriculum content across all states and territories in Australia.

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34   Kimberley Education Regional Office, Western Australia Department of Education, *Submission 117*, p. 1.

35   Kimberley Education Regional Office, Western Australia Department of Education, *Submission 117*, p. 1.

36   L Jones, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 11.

Implementation of Phase 1 of the Australia Curriculum began in 2011 and is due to be fully implemented across all states and territories by 2014. Phase 1 includes English, mathematics, science and history.

4.57   The Australian Curriculum sets out what all young people should be taught through the specification of curriculum content and the learning expected at points in their schooling through the specification of achievement standards.

4.58   The Australian Curriculum includes a focus on seven general capabilities:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- information and communication technology competence
- critical and creative thinking
- ethical behaviour
- personal and social competence and intercultural understanding, and
- three cross-curriculum priorities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia and Sustainability.

These have been embedded where relevant and appropriate in each learning area and can be viewed explicitly in the curriculum online.[37]

4.59   The inclusion of Aboriginal studies in the curriculum provides an Indigenous perspective across all core subject areas. This inclusion has significant potential to inform all students of the histories and cultures of Indigenous Australians, to raise interest in learning an Aboriginal language, and to offer the value to all Australians of Indigenous languages.

4.60   Through the Australian Curriculum, Aboriginal Languages will be offered as a language option. The inclusion of Aboriginal languages recognises the potential benefits for all Australians of learning an Aboriginal language. It operates from the fundamental principle that for all students, learning to communicate in two or more languages is a rich, challenging experience of engaging with and participating in the linguistic and cultural diversity of our interconnected world.

4.61   ACARA noted that the option of choosing Aboriginal languages in the Australian Curriculum offers both opportunities and challenges. Teaching Aboriginal languages requires a substantial investment in resources to

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37   ACARA, *The Australian Curriculum*
<www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/Overview> accessed 6 August 2012.

respond to the need for language research, documentation and development of a range of language learning materials. ACARA commented that:

> ...the potential benefits of such an investment are likely to be widespread and profound, providing crucial support to Aboriginal communities' language revival efforts at a critical time.
>
> ACARA informed the Committee that extensive collaboration and consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities had occurred in relation to the Australian Curriculum.
>
> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and academics contributed to development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority, providing advice on its inclusion within the Australian Curriculum learning areas/subjects and in curriculum writing activities.[38]

4.62   Face-to-face consultation meetings were held across Australia specifically focussing on the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures cross-curriculum priority. Invitations were sent to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and community members and extended through State and Territory Indigenous Education Consultative Bodies and Education Authorities. A total of 230 people attended these consultation forums.

4.63   ACARA informed the Committee that the development of a Framework for Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages is underway as part of the first stage of development of the Australian Curriculum: Languages. Programs types to be developed include:

- first language maintenance and development

- second language learning, and

- language revival (including language revitalisation, language renewal, and language reclamation).

4.64   The Framework will elaborate on the program types, content, and achievement standards related to each, as well as the protocols that must be followed in decision-making in learning and teaching Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages.

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38   ACARA, *The Australian Curriculum*
      <www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/Overview> accessed 6 August 2012.

4.65   There will be some examples of how the Framework is realised in specific languages for each program-type. Language-specific curriculum development will be undertaken by state/territory jurisdictions in consultation with the relevant communities.[39]

4.66   ACARA has released a shape paper, *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages* that provides broad directions for the development of languages curriculum. Writing of languages curriculum is underway beginning with F-10 Chinese and Italian and a Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages. [40]

4.67   The Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages is due for completion by the end of 2013.[41]

4.68   During the inquiry the Committee received evidence that supported the incorporation of languages into the Australian Curriculum currently being developed by ACARA.

4.69   The Association of Independent Schools SA (AISSA) commented:

> The place of Languages in the education programs of schools is currently a focus of debate as the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) progressively develops the Australian Curriculum. The place of Language Learning in Indigenous communities should be an integral element of this debate.[42]

4.70   The South Australia Commission for Catholic Schools (SACCS) notes that in the 'Draft Shape Paper of the Australian Curriculum: Languages' (Draft Shape Paper) the term 'Australian languages' is used to designate the languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. The Draft Paper additionally states that the inclusion of Indigenous languages will:

- meet the needs and rights of young people to learn about their own identity
- assist young people to understand and develop a deep appreciation of their culture, language, land and country.
- contribute to the wellbeing of young people.[43]

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39   ACARA, *Submission 151*, pp. 3-4.

40   'F' stands for Foundation year, ie kindergarten or prep.

41   ACARA, *The Australian Curriculum* <www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/Overview> accessed 6 August 2012.

42   Association of Independent Schools SA, *Submission 10*, p. 1.

43   SACCS, *Submission 15*, p. 1.

4.71   SACCS supports these premises and acknowledges the numerous benefits
         of including Indigenous languages in the curriculum, particularly in early
         education through a focus on oral communication.

4.72   SACCS recognizes that particular attention needs to be given to the
         inclusion of Indigenous languages in schools. The implementation of
         programs that encourage the maintenance of Indigenous languages and
         the recruitment and employment of Indigenous educators to effectively
         undertake this role is a pertinent and complex dilemma, most specifically
         in urban settings. Indigenous Languages policy writers will need to work
         closely with Aboriginal communities and educational institutions to
         ensure engagement in decision making for the provision of effective
         outcomes in this arena. [44]

4.73   This position was reiterated in a submission from the Catholic Education
         office, Lismore which stated:

         > Including indigenous languages in the school curriculum
         > contributes to the Indigenous students' social and emotional
         > welling by developing their sense of self (being) and their
         > connectedness to the school (belonging). The provision of
         > language teachers from the local community provide realistic and
         > achievable role models (becoming).[45]

4.74   The following concerns were highlighted in a submission about the
         content of the Australian Curriculum:

         > There are concerns that Aboriginal content may not be sufficiently
         > covered, with the Stolen Generations and other key issues not a
         > compulsory component of Aboriginal history. The number of
         > hours allocated to the Australian History curriculum in junior high
         > school, which includes Aboriginal history, has also been raised as
         > a concern, with 50 hours allocated for this subject that was initially
         > intended to cover 70-80 hours a year.

         > In addition, the level at which Aboriginal studies is introduced
         > and maintained through the grade years is not evenly spread from
         > early primary onwards, with age appropriate resources, but is
         > weighted to the latter years of high school.[46]

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44   South Australia Commission for Catholic Schools (SACCS), *Submission 15*, pp. 1-2.

45   Diocese of Lismore, Catholic Education Office, *Submission 86*, p. 4.

46   New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Department of Education and
     Communities, *Submission 98*, p. 18.

Committee comment

4.75   The Committee is pleased that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
        histories and cultures will be embedded now within the Australian
        Curriculum where appropriate. This will be informative for all students
        and will contribute towards an improved understanding and recognition
        of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

4.76   It appears that ACARA has undertaken broad consultation with the
        Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop the shape
        paper, *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages* from which the
        Framework for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages
        component will be written. The Committee keenly awaits the
        development of the Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres
        Strait Islander Languages due for completion by the end of 2013.

4.77   The Committee impresses the need to incorporate flexibility into the
        Australian Curriculum Languages Framework to allow for Indigenous
        communities to work with schools in this area and to assist in the
        development of teaching resources and the training of local Indigenous
        language teachers.

4.78   The Committee notes that the Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait
        Islander Languages is due to be completed by 2013 but does not have an
        implementation date or phase in schedule. In the interim, the Committee
        believes the Commonwealth Government should continue to support
        where possible Indigenous language learning in schools with Indigenous
        students who speak an Indigenous language other than Standard
        Australian English.

4.79   The Committee strongly supports the development of the Framework and
        its inclusion in the Australian Curriculum. Given the importance placed
        on these initiatives by Indigenous communities, the Committee considers
        there would be value in specifying dates for the proposed implementation
        of the Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages on
        its website.

Recommendation 11 - Indigenous language learning in school

4.80   **The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government
        coordinate with the states and territories to announce dates for the
        implementation of Phase 2 of the Australian Curriculum.**

Early childhood language learning

4.81   The Commonwealth Government recognises that quality early childhood
        education is critical to ensuring young children have opportunities for
        early learning, socialisation and development. As a result one of the
        Closing the Gap targets is committed to ensuring all Indigenous four year
        olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education by
        2013.

4.82   In May 2012 the Committee visited the Halls Creek Children and Family
        Centre which was set up under the Remote Service Delivery National
        Partnership Agreement. The Committee was impressed that Indigenous
        language learning was encouraged in the childcare centre.

4.83   The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
        (DEEWR) discussed with the Committee several initiatives that the
        Commonwealth Government is funding to provide early childhood
        support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students:

    ■   The Early Childhood Language and Literacy Parents Project - PaCE
        project on Groote Eylandt in the Northern Territory. The Early
        Childhood Language and Literacy Parents Project is being delivered by
        the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation (ALNF) working
        closely with parents, carers and community members of Umbakumba,
        Angurugu and Milyakburra. The project includes the delivery of
        workshops that teach parents foundational preliteracy and language
        learning platforms that they can use to support the early learning of
        their children. The project runs from April 2010 – December 2012 and
        supports parents, carers and community members to stimulate
        children's early developmental language and pre-literacy skills so that
        they are ready to learn and thrive when they start Pre-school or
        transition to formal schooling.

    ■   The Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) -
        The Australian Government has committed $32.5 million over five
        years (2008-2012) to roll-out the Home Interaction Program for Parents
        and Youngsters (HIPPY) to 50 communities nationally and support
        around 3,000 families. The ability to adapt HIPPY to individual
        community needs is central in ensuring participating children, parents
        and carers successfully complete the program. Adaptations to the
        program may include:

        ⇒   employment of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tutors, and

⇒ flexibility in the mode of delivery and taking time to break down concepts and stories. For example in group settings over an extended period rather than the usual 30 minute individual family session; program delivery in a mix of English and traditional language; inclusion of extended family/clan members in program delivery; and inclusion of translated materials.[47]

4.84 There is a building momentum to ensure that Indigenous languages are recognised and incorporated in early education such as childcare centres and preschool or preparatory (Foundation) years.

4.85 International research has shown that early childhood Aboriginal language and cultural programs lead to increased self-esteem, improved academic performance, improved school attendance, reduced drop-out rates and better proficiency in reading skills in both the Indigenous language and English.[48]

4.86 Early learning experiences through playgroups, child care and kindergarten, rich in both home languages, (ie contact or traditional languages and Standard Australian English) can support early literacy and numeracy outcomes and the transition into school.

4.87 The Committee received evidence that supported this concept of valuing Indigenous languages in early education:

> Early childhood is an incredible time, of learning about their world and their place in it, for all young students. It is a time to enrich and develop language skills. It follows then, that for those children who have an Indigenous mother tongue, this important early learning time should be in their first language. Quality bilingual/multilingual maintenance programs will introduce and develop English skills through planned, supportive ESL lessons.[49]

4.88 At a public hearing in Brisbane, the Queensland Department of Education and Training (Queensland DET) discussed with the Committee what is being done to incorporate Indigenous languages in early education.

> *Foundations for Success* is the teaching guidelines for the pre-prep program for 3½- to four-year-olds in 35 remote Indigenous communities. It is a guideline for teaching staff that embeds in it as one of its key principles the importance of recognising home language as a foundational understanding and as a bridge to

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47 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission 131*, p. 14.
48 TSRA, *Submission 146*, p. 8.
49 Trevor Stockley, *Submission 62*, pp. 9-10.

students learning Australian standard English early on in their preschool career.[50]

4.89   The Queensland Government is committed to enhancing pre-Prep programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to better prepare them for school through the implementation of DET's *Foundations for Success* guidelines.

4.90   *Foundations for Success* assists educators to plan, implement, document and reflect on a holistic early learning program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children before the preparatory year in Queensland. The guidelines include significant principles and advice regarding language:

> *Foundations for success* provides educators with strategies to support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to move between their home, an early learning program and school. It helps children develop strong foundations with both the culture/s and language/s of their family and of the wider world, allowing them to move fluently across cultures without compromising their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities.
>
> Educators promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's ongoing first language/s development by including adult first language speakers within the program at every opportunity. The program is language-based, rich in shared and sustained conversation and resources to support the development of children's first language/s in parallel with their developing awareness about Standard Australian English (SAE) as a second or additional language.[51]

4.91   Language is a key factor influencing the educational challenges facing many Indigenous children. Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group noted that:

> ... if we ignore the fact that children are not being offered the connection between the spoken language of their home with a set of matching resources in preschool and early school years, we are condemning them to a life of severe educational disadvantage.[52]

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50   C Gorman, Queensland DET, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2011, p. 2.

51   Queensland DET, *Submission 109*, p. 7.

52   Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group, *Submission 25,* p. 2.

Language Nests

4.92   An effective means of including language and culture into early education is through Language Nests.

4.93   Language Nests are pre-schools or crèches that are run by local Indigenous language speakers. Children attending the Language Nests are immersed in the local language and culture.

4.94   A submission from the Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity (RNLD) described Language Nests and the benefits of them:

> Typically, a small group of children comes together in a family atmosphere through the week to be cared for by older people who are speakers of the target language. Bringing together the grandparent and grandchild generations in a home---like environment replicates or repairs intergenerational transmission. Language nest programs also typically require parents to commit to learn the language alongside their young children. This is one of the most effective components of the program and one which differentiates it from school language learning programs. It ensures that the children enrolled in the language nest can continue to use the language they are learning within the home and community.[53]

4.95   The Social Justice Report 2009 supported the use of language nests and made the following comment about resourcing them effectively:

> Establishing language nests requires the coordination of policy and resources over a number of portfolio areas across the state, territory and Commonwealth governments. Language Nests require complementary policy in the areas of early childhood services, employment services for Indigenous language speakers, training for elders and community members if required, and possibly infrastructure development resourcing. Initiating this activity goes well beyond applying for a grant from the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records (MILR) program.[54]

4.96   The NILS report discussed the benefits of Language Nests:

> Focusing on Language Nests for pre-schoolers is important because they reach children at the time when they are most

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53   RNLD, *Submission 130*, p. 7.
54   Australian Human Rights Commission, *Social Justice Report 2009,* p. 74.

receptive to learning languages. Language Nests are also important because they are institutions that sit between schools and communities and can help to bring the two together.[55]

4.97   The teaching of Aboriginal languages to pre-school children has been occurring over a number of years in NSW, on the central coast through the Many Rivers Language Centre and through the Gugaga Childcare Centre in La Perouse, among others. These language programs have proved very successful, with Aboriginal Elders teaching at the pre-schools and the development of age appropriate resources, such as naming body parts and stories in language, as an introduction to Aboriginal language and culture. These pre-schools report benefits for Aboriginal children who develop an increased sense of pride, language and numeracy recognition and improved social interaction skills.[56]

4.98   Language Nests are operating internationally and the Indigenous language programs in Australia expose children in early childhood to Indigenous language learning, stories and culture, as a key strategy to prevent language loss. Language Nests immerse young children in language use through play and activities when children are young and most adaptable to language uptake.

4.99   Margaret Florey from the Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity, (RNLD) was very passionate about the successful nature of Language Nests in other countries:

> ... we have really strong evidence from other settings that both the master-apprentice model and the language nest model are effective in recreating intergenerational transmission of languages.[57]

4.100   RNLD informed the Committee that in the past very few language nests have been set up in Australia. The reason for this is that people need to be trained adequately before Language Nests can be successfully established. In early 2012, RNLD organised for two intensive master-apprentice workshops to be run to train people wishing to teacher their Indigenous language. RNLD commented:

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55   Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (AIATSIS) and the Federation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and Culture (FATSILC), *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005*, p. 114.

56   New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Education and Community, *Submission 98*, p. 9.

57   M Florey, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 February 2012, p. 8.

> We are bringing 36 Aboriginal people from right around the country to two workshops—one in Alice Springs and one in Kununurra—to pilot the master-apprentice program. The American trainers who founded the model are coming to train people to become trainers in master-apprentice and then to be able to go out and to train other people in their regions in the master-apprentice model. That is what I hope we will do with the language nest model to intensively train a large number of people from right around Australia in setting up the model, together with the second-language classes for adults.[58]

4.101   There was abundant evidence from the United States and New Zealand attesting to the benefit associated with teaching Indigenous languages in early childhood.[59] In New Zealand, Language Nests are attributed with averting the loss of the Maori language in a generation, with 19 percent of Maori youth aged between 15 and 24 are now able to speak the Maori language te reo Maori.

4.102   The success of the Language Nest program is further supported in Hawai'i, where Pu'nana Leo, the key language body, established Language Nests in pre-schools in 1980 when less than 40 Hawaiian children were able to speak their language. Through the establishment of Language Nests by 2009 the number of children speaking language had increased to 2000.[60]

Committee comment

4.103   The Committee believes that Language Nests are a practical way of ensuring that Indigenous languages are maintained and revitalised, regardless of whether they be classified as traditional/heritage, or a contact language.

4.104   Further benefits include employment and capacity building with Indigenous communities. Language Nests can improve early childhood learning outcomes and bring wider benefits for the participating community and for the use of the language. The returns of Language Nests are many as they encourage the continuation of the language as well as empowering adults and elders in the community to come together with younger members of the community to learn their Indigenous language.

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58   M Florey, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 February 2012, p. 8.

59   Australian Federation of Graduate Women, *Submission 47*, p. 2,

60   New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Education and Community, *Submission 98*, p. 9.

4.105   The Committee is aware that Language Nests have been used in other countries as best practice for maintenance and revitalisation of Indigenous languages. The Committee recommends that language nest programs be resourced throughout Australia by the Commonwealth Government Indigenous Language Support program as well as by state and territory governments and the non-government sector where possible.

Recommendation 12 – Language Nests

4.106   **The Committee recommends that the Office for the Arts, through the Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) program, prioritise funding for Language Nest programs throughout Australia.**

The Committee further recommends that the Commonwealth Government give consideration to establishing Language Nest programs in early childhood learning centres and preschools as set up under National Partnership Agreements.

Identifying first languages

4.107   It is well known that for many Indigenous students first attending school, English is not their first language. When a teacher is faced with a class full of students who may represent a variety of language groups, or even a class of students with most speaking English only and one or two with poor English skills, it is too easy for non English speakers to be left behind. Educators recognise that every student starts school at a different level of learning, however little recognition is given to identifying a child's first language and beginning their education from that point.

4.108   Identifying languages is important for all students. Particularly in the early school years however it is essential for any new student to the school to be assessed.

4.109   Accurate information about and particular acknowledgement of the creoles and varieties of Aboriginal English spoken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students must inform the development and implementation of all educational programs and initiatives for these students.[61]

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61   ACTA, *Submission 72*, p. 20.

4.110   The Queensland representatives from the Department of Education and Training (DET) commented that sometimes a contact language can be mistaken for poor English. At a public hearing they stated:

> ... understanding the language varieties that students speak is helpful. If you are thinking that students are speaking a bad form of English, the way you might deal with that situation would be totally different to the way you would deal with it if you understood that the student actually had a full and complete language and needed to be taught Australian standard English explicitly and as a second language learner in order to access the curriculum.[62]

Committee comment

4.111   The Committee encourages the Government to meet the Closing the Gap targets to ensure all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years. Whilst this is an important target it is not good enough to provide access to early childhood education if the Indigenous students and their families are not well understood. Recognising first languages and developing appropriate teaching strategies and learning environments are essential to engaging Indigenous students and the community from the critical early years.

4.112   International and Australian research indicates that Indigenous students will have improved educational outcomes overall if first languages are identified and incorporated into the learning environment in the early years of education.

4.113   The Committee was concerned to hear that at times teachers do not recognise that some Indigenous students are speaking Aboriginal English and confuse it with a poor form of Standard Australian English. A greater awareness of Indigenous languages and their current use should be brought to the attention of the teaching community as well as included in teacher training. Teacher training is discussed further in Chapter 5.

4.114   The Committee believes it is essential for all Indigenous students to be given a first language assessment in order to determine what language skills young Indigenous students have when entering early childhood education. Further learning can then build on a child's existing knowledge and understanding, rather than alienating the child from learning and understanding.

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62   C Gorman, Queensland DET, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2011, p. 3.

4.115   The Committee was impressed with the Queensland Department of Education and Training's work in the field of Indigenous early education, including the *Foundations for Success* program and the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Statement*.

4.116   The *Foundations for Success* program acknowledges the importance of culture and language that families and children bring to school and encourages first languages to be included in early education. The Committee considers that States and Territory education departments should consider developing similar programs such as *Foundations for Success*.

4.117   Noting the importance of making early learning a positive experience and of understanding the prior learning of a student the Committee recommends that mandatory first-language assessments be carried out for Indigenous students entering early childhood education.

Recommendation 13 - First language assessment

4.118   **The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to develop protocols for mandatory first-language assessment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering early childhood education.**

4.119   Following on from this recommendation, if an Indigenous child's first language is other than Standard Australian English then the methods of teaching must be adjusted to create the appropriate learning environment. Teaching methods, such as using English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D). Appropriate training for teachers to meet the special needs of EAL/D learning is discussed in Chapter 5.

English as an Additional Language (EAL/D)

4.120   Learning English as an Additional language/dialect (EAL/D) has been referred to frequently throughout the inquiry using different names including: ESL, English as a Second Language and LOTE learning, Language Other Than English. However it is now recognised that ESL is not always an accurate descriptor since English is often the third or fourth language being acquired, as is the case for some Indigenous language speakers. The terms EAL/D, ESL and LOTE learning are used interchangeably within this report.

4.121   The 2006 Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood
Development and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA)[63] report identified a lack of
this specialist instruction at the centre of the educational achievement gap
for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students:

> Disproportionate numbers of Indigenous students do not meet
> national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy at Years 3, 5 and 7 –
> results are generally about 20 percent below the national average.
> Of grave concern is the fact that the proportion of Indigenous
> students who meet these benchmarks drops significantly from
> Year 3 to Year 7. Research attributes this drop to the difference
> between the acquisition of basic interpersonal communication
> skills in a new language (which takes about two years) and
> academic language proficiency (which takes around seven years).
> From preschool to Year 3, most learning is based on acquiring
> interpersonal communication skills. At Year 4, the focus changes
> to the acquisition of academic language proficiency. ***Without
> second language or dialect instruction at this point, students fall
> behind at increasing rates.*** Lack of academic achievement and loss
> of confidence in these early years mean that most Indigenous
> students never catch up.[64]

4.122   The EAL/D support materials developed by ACARA to complement the
Australian Curriculum in all learning areas will assist mainstream
teachers in Australian schools to understand the diverse linguistic and
cultural backgrounds, skills and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander students, and to address their linguistic and socio-cultural
learning needs.[65]

4.123   The Queensland Department of Education has been doing considerable
research on ESL learning in various communities. DET's Northern
Indigenous Schooling Support Unit has a Language Perspectives Team
that consists of teachers and linguists. The team conducts research on
second language acquisition and vernacular languages, supports schools
with building capacity to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander ESL/D learners, implements projects, including the Bridging the
Language Gap project, and offers professional development.

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63   MCEEYA is now called the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood
(SCSEEC). It comprises state, territory and Commonwealth Ministers with responsibility for
these areas. SCSEEC is one of twelve Standing Councils established under new Council of
Australian Governments arrangements.

64   ACTA, *Submission 72*, p. 8.

65   ACTA, *Submission 72*, p. 31.

4.124   The Queensland Department of Education listed in its submission the
        English as a Second Language / English as a Second Dialect Procedure. It
        stated 'This procedure has been developed to provide a clear definition of
        ESL learners and outline the responsibilities of schools and regions. It is
        inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ESL/D learners.'[66]

4.125   The Language Perspectives team informed the Committee of the following
        case studies highlighting the significant need for EAL/D teaching
        instruction:

   ■ *White Rock Longitudinal Study* has revealed that many Indigenous
     students at this urban primary school in far north Queensland are ESL
     learners, despite enrolment data indicating otherwise. Now in its 4th
     year, it is showing positive correlations between Indigenous students'
     level of spoken SAE and their results in standardised tests.
     Furthermore, most Indigenous ESL students are not attaining levels of
     SAE sufficient for accessing classroom learning independently and are
     therefore dependent on teacher knowledge and skills to teach the
     "language load" of classroom concepts and content.

   ■ Woree State High School Study demonstrated that there are many
     "hidden ESL learners", especially with Indigenous language
     backgrounds in this urban high school in far north Queensland.
     Students whose families and communities have experienced language
     shift to creoles and related varieties (which often have no standardised
     nomenclature) require language awareness in order to be able to self-
     declare their language backgrounds. Many of the identified ESL
     learners were at Bandscale levels in speaking and writing where they
     would not be able to actively and independently participate in
     classroom learning through SAE without considerable language
     support from teachers.

   ■ *Bundamba State High School study* showed how ESL learners at
     beginning and intermediate levels (Bandscale levels 1-2 and 3-4
     respectively) have literacy pathways which are clearly differentiated
     from L1 SAE speakers' in terms of vocabulary counts, quantity, errors
     and features of syntactic complexity. ESL learners begin to overlap with
     lower literacy SAE speakers' pathways at consolidating levels
     (Bandscale levels 5-6), where both groups of learners require focussed
     teaching of complex language in order to express complex ideas
     powerfully. This study also revealed many potentially "hidden ESL
     learners" in this metropolitan high school, as well as many identifiable

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66   Queensland DET, *Submission 109*, p. 13.

ESL students who had not attained levels of SAE sufficient to access classroom learning without significant language teaching.[67]

4.126   SACCS considers it a social justice issue that Indigenous Australians are supported to develop English language fluency in rigorous English as Second Language (ESL) programs alongside literacy/ies in first language/s.

> In communities where English is a second language or dialect, we promote educational models akin to those offered for migrant children in New Arrivals programs. This requires a language based curriculum delivered by teachers who have expertise in ESL teaching and learning. These programs are essential to the success of both multi-lingual programs, and post-school transitions for Indigenous people who work and function across multiple cultures.[68]

4.127   A study by Daly, Rural Outcomes of Schooling Research Project Report, examined what strategies were characteristic of the rural schools that performed at a higher level than others in state-wide tests. The Report highlighted the need to build positive relationships between school and community, build student self confidence and engage Aboriginal students through the use of culture. The teaching of Aboriginal language as a language other than English (LOTE) was a key strategy:

> An Aboriginal language as LOTE for all students in Year 8, taught by an Aboriginal elder, is an effective community interaction that seemed to have a strong influence on the learning, ..[of the] whole community.[69]

4.128   The Committee was told that an accurate understanding and reporting of the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language backgrounds is crucial to any plan to improve educational outcomes for these students:

> In the Northern Territory, for example, several dozen different traditional/heritage languages are in active use by Aboriginal people, who constitute approximately 30 percent of the territory's total population of 200,000 and up to 49 percent of the population in remote and very remote areas.

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67   Queensland DET, *Submission 109*, p. 13.

68   SACCS, *Submission 15*, p. 2.

69   New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Education and Community, *Submission 98*, p. 6.

The dominant or only language of the majority of Aboriginal children entering Northern Territory schools is any one or more of these languages and/or a variety of Aboriginal English and/or an Aboriginal creole. All remote and very remote schools in the Northern Territory are thus operating in bilingual and bicultural contexts because that is the nature of the students in the communities they serve. In addition to this, in a number of multilingual communities there is an expectation that, as they grow older, Aboriginal young people will maintain, learn and/or become fluent in one or more of these traditional/heritage languages as well as English.[70]

Committee comment

4.129   The Committee strongly supports the need for schools and teachers to identify all students who need EAL/D support when entering the education system. This is important for teachers to be aware of Indigenous students who may have Kriol or an Aboriginal contact language as their first language as in the past such languages have been misunderstood to be poor forms of English. As a result, specific EAL/D teaching methods have not been implemented for these students resulting in poorer educational outcomes.

4.130   The issue of Both Ways learning and partnerships arises again in this section. Indigenous families should be encouraged to meet with the school before enrolling the student to discuss the child's first language background and form a partnership with the school to be aware of and support learning strategies.

4.131   The Committee believes it is critical for all Indigenous students attending school with English as an additional language to be taught using EAL/D methodologies. Where possible the Committee supports bilingual teaching for Indigenous communities in the first language and supported by EAL/D teaching strategies.

Improving learning outcomes

4.132   While EAL/D recognition and resources are important the Committee received substantial evidence about the value of continuing Indigenous language learning in order to improve overall learning outcomes.

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70   ACTA, *Submission 72*, p. 8.

4.133   The Committee received a plethora of evidence supporting the benefits of including Indigenous languages in education. The evidence and witnesses informed the Committee that by understanding and recognising the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of Indigenous children, education departments are in a better position to provide appropriate support for these students. The research has demonstrated that it is critical to implement relevant support for children and families in the early years of education as engagement and continuous attendance is vital in the early years in order to increase retention rates in the latter schooling years.

4.134   The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) stressed that 'The active recognition and validation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' languages and cultures by teachers and educational authorities, within educational curricula, and through the appointment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators, are essential to students' wellbeing and success at school.'[71]

4.135   In a submission ACTA commented that effective educational policies and programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students must entail:

- accurate identification and acknowledgement of students actual linguistic and cultural backgrounds
- the explicit valuing of the skills, knowledge and understandings they bring from these backgrounds to the classroom
- provision for empathetic and ongoing consultation and negotiation with local communities and elders, and for their collaboration, input and participation in the development and implementation of school curricula
- distinctive, differentiated and expert second language pedagogies and assessment programs designed to address the specific needs of the diverse cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are learning Standard Australian English as an additional language or dialect.[72]

4.136   In a joint submission from a number of Indigenous educators, the value of recognising and supporting Indigenous languages was supported:

As experienced educators in Indigenous Education, we believe that when the mother tongue is valued and recognized, school can become a place where children explore and extend their cultural

71   ACTA, *Submission 72*, p. 19.
72   ACTA, *Submission 72*, p. 32.

understandings, while they begin to learn English and the knowledge regarded as important by the Australian society.[73]

4.137   Another joint submission discussed the benefits of Indigenous children learning in their mother tongue:

> We must give our children in Wadeye and the Thamarrurr region the opportunity to receive quality education. Our people are strong in culture and many languages are spoken in the community and back in the Homelands of the different clans. We dream, think and communicate in our daily lives through our language.
>
> At OLSH Thamarrurr Catholic School we now have a 'culture centre' called DA NGIMALMIN FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY CENTRE. It's a place of significance in the centre of the school where our old people come to teach our children our way of life. Teaching the children about people and the relationship to each other, traditional dance and songs, stories, land, name of animals and plants, the universe, art and craft and the list goes on. The culture centre fits in well with what the teachers are doing in the Early Years. We know it will form a very strong foundation for our children's learning and hope that by strengthening education in the first language will make learning in the English language easier. Children will enjoy coming to school every day to learn. (Tobias Ngardinithi Nganbe and Gemma Alanga Nganbe, Personal communication, August 21, 2011)[74]

4.138   Language education for Indigenous adults was raised with the Committee. A submission suggested that further education for Indigenous adults would be beneficial in bridging the divide between Indigenous adults and their children and hence could assist with 'Two way' learning strategies. Why Warriors Pty Ltd and the Arnhem Human Enterprise Development (AHED) project stated:

> If Indigenous children are being taught English then it would be beneficial for Indigenous adults with limited English proficiency to attend adult classes. Some of these classes would specialise in areas such as Science, technology, areas that have progressed tremendously in the last 50 years.
>
> Because most of the knowledge that children are learning in school is new knowledge, that is, dominant culture knowledge which is

73   K Gale, B Graham and C Grimes, *Submission 19*, p. 2.
74   B Devlin and M Christie, *Submission 81*, pp. 3-4

new to the local Yolngu culture, there tends to be a gap between what the child is learning and what the parent and senior leaders of their Clan know. At times the worldview of the parents will clash with the knowledge received in the classroom across a range of different subjects. For example, children learning about microscopic organisms, germs and bacteria in the classroom may be re-educated by their family.[75]

Learning in first language

4.139   The Committee received many submissions which supported the idea that Indigenous students should be taught in their first language. The submissions described what had been tried in Australia in the past and what is being taught currently by way of bilingual education in some schools in the Northern Territory. There was a strong emphasis on the international research that supports the notion of better educational outcomes for children learning at school initially in their first Indigenous language.

4.140   A report published by the World Bank in 2006 supported the need to teach in first language, stating:

> Children learn better if they understand the language spoken in school. This is a straightforward observation borne out by study after study (Thomas and Collier, 1997; Dutcher, 1995; Patrinos and Velez, 1996; Walter, 2003). Even the important goal of learning a second language is facilitated by starting with a language the children already know. Cummins (2000) and others provide convincing evidence of the principle of interdependence—that second language learning is helped, not hindered by first language study. This leads to a simple axiom: the first language is the language of learning. It is by far the easiest way for children to interact with the world. And when the language of learning and the language of instruction do not match, learning difficulties are bound to follow.[76]

4.141   The Research Centre for Languages and Culture (RCLC) brought to the Committee's attention International research evidence of best policy and practice of languages in education for Indigenous Peoples. The RCLC

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75   Why Warriors Pty Ltd and the Arnhem Human Enterprise Development (AHED) project, *Submission 37*, p. 7.

76   Australian Society for Indigenous Languages (AuSIL), *Submission 60*, Attachment 1, p. 1.

[77] *Why and how
Africa should invest in African languages and multilingual education*. In
relation to this study RCLC commented:

> An evidence- and practice-based policy advocacy brief (Ouane and
> Glanz 2010) draws on the most recent evidence which indicates
> why and how indigenous languages need to be used, maintained
> and strengthened in education. While this research has been
> directed towards Africa, the research data, theoretical
> underpinnings, and scenario-setting would be useful for
> Australian considerations.[78]

4.142   In its submission the Australian Society for Indigenous Languages
        (AuSIL) commented:

> there is over 60 years of research around the world and in
> Australia to support the fact that early education in one's first
> language is the key to educational success in multilingual
> societies. As counter-intuitive as it might seem, this also results
> improved proficiency in second languages such as Standard
> English.[79]

4.143   AuSIL provided an attachment to its submission which highlighted the
        following benefits of educating children initially in their own language
        and transitioning them to the national language. These three points below
        are a subset of a longer list and were read out to the Committee during a
        public hearing in Darwin by Kendall Trudgen:

- Children LEARN BETTER. This is supported by study after
  study.
- Children in rural and/or marginalised populations STAY IN
  SCHOOL LONGER.
- Children in rural and/or marginalised populations REACH
  HIGHER LEVELS OF EDUCATION overall.[80]

4.144   Further support for a bilingual approach to education for Indigenous
        students suggested that wherever possible, all such children would be best
        served by a model of schooling that:

- values and uses their mother tongue and the knowledge
  encoded in that language as the starting point for their formal
  schooling

77   United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)
78   Research Centre for Languages and Culture (RCLC), *Submission 44*, p. 2.
79   AuSIL, *Submission 60*, p. 3.
80   AuSIL, *Submission 60*, Attachment 1, p. 7.

- demonstrates to the community that their way of being and knowing is valued and that the schooling offered will add on to what the children bring with them and not discard it or subtract from it

- develops literacy in the mother tongue before doing so in English

- continues Indigenous language and cultural studies as a highly valued strand of the total education program, leading to the development of translation, interpreting and other highly developed language skills [supporting the objectives of the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership]

- develops an appropriate curriculum for the teaching of all aspects of English, Mathematics and other mainstream studies, and

- attracts and maintains a body of teachers from both cultures who are specialists in teaching Indigenous children in a bilingual/bicultural setting.[81]

4.145   In a submission from Greg Dickson, a linguist from the Australian National University with many years experience working with Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, he described the meaning of bilingual education:

> Bilingual education programs are structured programs using two languages of instruction. One of the two languages will be the students' mother tongue, or first language. The other language is the 'target' language – usually a national or regional language of importance.[82]

4.146   His submission briefly outlined the history of bilingual education and the controversy that surrounds it:

> [Bilingual education] is an approach that was embraced and strongly supported by many Indigenous communities when offered to them in the 1970s and 1980s. Indigenous people and communities responded by drastically increasing the number of qualified Indigenous teachers and transformed schools into culturally-appropriate places of learning for their children. Bilingual education programs featuring Indigenous language have always been somewhat controversial. Critics of such programs seem to struggle ideologically with notions of giving Indigenous languages such a core role in education. Such views are linked to

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81   K Gale, B Graham and C Grimes, *Submission 57*, p. 3.

82   G Dickson, *Submission 125*, p. 5.

the general lack of value placed on Indigenous languages on a national level.[83]

4.147   The Committee received many submissions that were critical of the Northern Territory's education policy that dismantled several bilingual education programs in 2008. The following submission outlines when the Northern Territory introduced the First Four Hours policy and the negative impacts that were observed in some schools:

> Bilingual education in the Northern Territory has had a difficult history. In 2008, a significant move was made by the Northern Territory Government which has essentially ended its 37- year history. In 2008, the Northern Government announced the Compulsory Teaching in English for the First Four Hours, heavily restricting the use of Indigenous languages in education, in particular, seriously limiting their use as language of instruction and also limiting Indigenous language literacy practices.

> The policy has been criticised widely by politicians, educators, Indigenous leaders, Indigenous language speakers, linguists and human rights advocates. The introduction of the First Four Hours policy has coincided with a decline in attendance in most former bilingual schools despite recent policies developed by Federal and Territory governments designed to improve attendance. The First Four Hours policy has diminished the role that Aboriginal educators play in the education system and has not led to an obvious improvement in student outcomes. Note that many studies, including some carried out in the Northern Territory, show that bilingual education programs can lead to improved student outcomes in all areas.[84]

4.148   Statements supporting bilingual education and the use of Indigenous languages in education from Aboriginal educators across Northern Territory were shared with the Committee. The following quotations provided by Greg Dickson highlight the point that bilingual education supports the national language and the mother tongue or additional language:

> What we want is both-way teaching in the school – not only for two hours a week but everyday there should be both-way teaching… That policy of speaking English only at the school is the wrong thing – it is not good for our children … they will forget

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83   G Dickson, *Submission 125*, p. 5.
84   G Dickson, *Submission 125*, pp. 5-6.

> their language (Rembarrnga speaker Miliwanga Sandy (Beswick Community) in Gosford 2009).

> I am a qualified bilingual teacher… I speak several Yolŋu matha languages and English fluently. I have thirty-two years teaching experience… I have been told that I am not allowed to use the children's language anymore… I already know that the children won't understand what I'm saying, they will laugh at me, and they may even misbehave because they'll be bored and won't know what the lessons are about… What a strange role model I will be, a bilingual Yolŋu teacher, using only one of my languages! … The decision to make English the only important language in our schools will only make the situation for our young people worse as they struggle to be proud Yolŋu in a world that is making them feel that their culture is bad, unimportant and irrelevant in the contemporary world (Yunupingu 2010: 24-25).[85]

4.149   There is research that shows 'a number of studies, from the Northern Territory and internationally, provide evidence that bilingual education programs achieve higher outcomes than non-bilingual programs in similar settings.'[86]

4.150   Brian Devlin worked as a teacher-linguist at Yirrkala for three years and discussed with the Committee the benefits of bilingual education for Indigenous Australians. Dr Devlin is now an Associate Professor, Bilingual Education and Applied Linguistics at Charles Darwin University. He commented:

> I worked as teacher-linguist at Yirrkala. During that time, the bilingual program was accredited by the Department of Education. That meant that Yirrkala students in grades 5, 6 and 7 were found to be doing as well as or better than students in a comparable group of schools with English-only programs. In return, the department conferred official recognition and a permanent allocation of resources.

> From 1983, for two and a half years, I was principle of Shepherdson College at Galiwinku on Elcho Island. During that time, the bilingual program was evaluated by the department's accreditation team and was found to be doing as well as or better

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85   G Dickson, *Submission 125*, p. 6.

86   Concerned Australians, *Submission 16*, p. 2.

than a group of six comparable schools with English-only programs.[87]

4.151   The Evaluation of Literacy approach (ELA) is finding that by the time the children reach Grade 5 in the bilingual schools they achieve better results in active reading skills in English.[88]

4.152   The Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group commented that some of the bilingual programs in the Northern Territory were not funded and resourced adequately.

> The reported failure of bi-lingual programs in Australia has however overlooked the method of delivery of those programs in making recommendations for their closure. Any program which is from the outset poorly delivered and resourced will produce poor outcomes. In the case of bi-lingual teaching programs, this situation was wrongly used as a case against the effectiveness of traditional language learning as a means of supporting the development of English language competency.[89]

4.153   The Committee heard from Kendall Trudgen as to what he thought could be done to improve language learning in Indigenous communities. He made two points in relation to the community in Galiwinku:

> The first point was 'the idea to teach in first language as far as possible.' The second most important aspect would be to 'have community-controlled schools where the community makes decisions on the direction of their curriculum—have a national curriculum or a Territory based curriculum with the community controlling the implementation of it, including two-way learning.[90]

Committee comment

4.154   The Committee received convincing evidence for bilingual education. This evidence is supported nationally and internationally by numerous studies. Several international organisations such as the World Bank and UNESCO have published findings over many years that support Indigenous language learning in education. The research demonstrates that educational outcomes for students are higher when the mother tongue or first language is incorporated into early education.

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87   B Devlin, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 54.
88   Sisters' of St Joseph SA Reconciliation Circle, *Submission 41*, p. 4.
89   Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group, *Submission 25,* p. 2.
90   K Trudgen, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 15.

4.155   The Committee stresses that learning in first language does not mean that English proficiency will be neglected. The research undertaken in this area within Australia and internationally clearly states the dual benefits of first language learning in schools. The research shows that first language learning in primary education leads to improved English/dominant language competency.

4.156   After reviewing the evidence and speaking with the Northern Territory Government representatives in Darwin, the Committee believes the Northern Territory Government had the best of intentions in 2008 when it announced the Compulsory Teaching in English for the First Four Hours, in order to improve English competency and NAPLAN results. However the Committee believes this policy was not successful in achieving its aims of improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students in the Northern Territory. The Committee notes that the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training has withdrawn the Compulsory Teaching in English for the First Four Hours policy as of July2012. The Committee discusses NAPLAN in more detail in the last section of this chapter.

4.157   The Committee expresses its support for the teaching of first language in schools. Currently there appears to be some support for Indigenous languages in the very early years of development and education from 0-4 years, and then in some TAFE and university institutions. However there is only ad hoc support for Indigenous language learning in primary and secondary schools. The Committee is convinced that the evidence demonstrates that bilingual and multilingual students can deliver higher educational outcomes with the right programs and support in place.

4.158   Incorporating Indigenous languages into the education system leads to an improvement in both Standard Australian English and Indigenous languages and can have many cultural, health and wellbeing advantages. The use of bilingual education increases English proficiency and children and their communities can grow and prosper in a bilingual or multilingual society.

4.159   Indigenous languages have the potential to reap economic, social and cultural benefits to Indigenous communities and regions, with flow-on effects nationally and internationally. It is clear that incorporating Indigenous first languages into bilingual school programs supports the Commonwealth Government's Closing the Gap agenda.

4.160   The Committee believes that the term 'bilingual education' in the past has received negative connotations due to the fact that bilingual programs have lacked thorough community consultation and have not been

sufficiently resourced and supported by specifically trained language teachers and the bureaucracy. Careful consideration should be given to the process of delivering bilingual programs and most importantly real local community consultation is required to successfully implement bilingual programs.

4.161   The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government work with the state and territory governments to provide adequately resourced bilingual education programs for Indigenous communities in areas where the dominant first language is an Indigenous language (traditional or contact). These language varieties are defined and discussed in Chapter 2.

Recommendation 14 – Bilingual education programs

4.162   **The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government work with state and territory governments to provide adequately resourced bilingual school education programs for Indigenous communities from the earliest years of learning, where the child's first language is an Indigenous language (traditional or contact).**

Achieving English language competency

4.163   Abilities to read and write in English and to be numerate are critical if young people are to complete their schooling successfully in Australia, exercise choice about what they do in life beyond school and participate fully in the economic and social development of their local communities and the broader Australian society.

4.164   All students in Australia have the right to be taught to communicate effectively in Standard Australian English, to understand how the English language works, to think and learn in and through English, and to be given access to the cultural understandings it carries.[91] But Standard Australian English learning should not be at the expense of Indigenous languages and cultural learning. Neither should Indigenous languages and cultural learning be to the detriment of English language learning. Both should act as bridges to succeed in the other rather than creating barriers.

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91   ACTA, *Submission 72*, p. 31.

4.165   All Indigenous and non Indigenous contributors to the inquiry reiterated the point that they wanted their children to be fluent in both their Indigenous languages and English:

> Indigenous community leaders and parents that we talk to consistently want their children to be able to function fully and responsibly in both the traditional language and culture and in Standard English and the mainstream culture and job market. It is not an either/or situation (either traditional language or English); it is a both/and situation (both traditional language and English). People who think they want either/or, and that indigenous parents do not want their children to be proficient in Standard English are misinformed.[92]

4.166   Case studies of schools and programs that accept, value and build on the linguistic and cultural diversity of their students and communities are presented in the 2008 *Australian Council for Educational Research Report Indigenous Languages Programmes in Australian Schools*. These case studies exemplify the principle that 'learning an Indigenous language and becoming proficient in the English language are complementary rather than mutually exclusive activities'.[93]

4.167   Just as understanding the structure of numbers lets children apply those concepts to finance or physics, so understanding the structure of one language enables a child to grasp the tenets of another language.

4.168   For example, the Noongar language revitalisation program at Moorditj Noongar Community College near Perth is embedded within all aspects of the school curriculum, students home language/s and their English language development needs are also fully integrated into the teaching and learning program:

4.169   Students at Moorditj mostly speak Aboriginal English and learn Noongar as a second language. A two way approach is used in teaching all programmes at the school. This means that while teaching Standard Australian English, staff at the school also acknowledge and value the students' first home language.

4.170   The Gumbaynggirr language program implemented at St Mary's Primary School at Bowraville on the mid north coast of New South Wales also produced positive outcomes for both teacher professional learning and students English language development:

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92   AuSIL, *Submission 60*, p. 3.
93   ACTA, *Submission 72*, p. 14.

4.171   The rigour of the programme at St Mary's is enhanced by staff understanding of the general principles of language teaching. Classroom teachers commented that not only were the children learning Gumbaynggirr, but that their English language skills had increased as they were introduced to how languages worked – notions of syntax, structure, and grammar were being applied to English in ways teachers had not been able to get children to apply before. In the words of one teacher, 'students now have some vocabulary to use in our discussions about the English language.'[94]

4.172   The benefits of learning an Aboriginal language can be significant for Aboriginal students. The 2008 research pilot project, 'Aboriginal Languages Research: Impact of Learning an Aboriginal Language on Primary School Student's Literacy in English', which consulted with a number of schools, Principals and teachers, found that students developed better literacy skills in English word awareness and decoding, if they learned an Aboriginal language. The process of learning an Aboriginal language supported students in developing the critical early skills of learning the connection between sounds and letters in English.[95]

4.173   Lola Jones informed the Committee on the following benefits of learning first language which leads to strongly English competency outcomes:

> Kids can learn to code-switch and they can be proud that they speak Broome English or Walmajarri or Yawuru. It does help, because when you are teaching language and you are discussing verbs, and in Yawuru the verbs are really different and this is how they operate, straightaway that is something that kids can relate to their standard Australian English. We say, 'We are going to learn about adjectives or adverbs,' and kids straightaway get it: 'Oh, this is how it works in Yawuru.'

> Sometimes when I have talked to classroom teachers I tell them that it is about intonation, the stress, and people say, 'No, we don't do that in English.' They do not understand because they only speak English. But when you have another language to compare it to, it actually helps your language learning skills in whichever language you are using, whether it is standard Australian English or whether it is Kriol or Walmajarri or Yawuru. Once you have a different language to compare it to, it makes it easier.[96]

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94   ACTA, *Submission 72*, pp. 14-15.

95   New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Education and Communities, *Submission 98*, p. 5.

96   L Jones, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 13.

NAPLAN

4.174   The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is the national testing program for all Australian students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. It commenced in 2008 and runs annually in May each year. NAPLAN consists of five tests across three days, assessing the following domains: reading, writing, language conventions and numeracy.

4.175   The National Assessment Program is run at the direction of the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (previously named Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs {MCEECDYA}).

4.176   The Committee received a lot of evidence that described the negative impact of NAPLAN testing for children who learn English as an Additional Language. The point was made by many academics, teachers and international research to show that students learning a language other than English do not start to become proficient in the language until the latter years of primary school.

4.177   The ACTA submission highlighted four problematic areas for Indigenous Australians being assessed by NAPLAN:

- First, these assessments are liable to make false assumptions about learning contexts and about age-appropriate knowledge of Standard Australian English.

- Second, because assessment tasks are written (from a particular cultural viewpoint) in a language that learners do not understand or understand only partially, and they require learners to respond in that language, they do not permit learners to demonstrate what they do know and can do.

- Third, such age-based assessments of literacy and numeracy fail to provide data that relate to these learners' actual learning milestones or progress, for example, in mastering the complexities of Standard Australian English question forms.

- Fourth, because they do not take account of learners home language/s, the data they provide is open to misinterpretation – for example, a failure to recognise phonemic differences in Standard Australian English has been taken, quite incorrectly, to indicate that learners have a speech or hearing disability.[97]

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97   ACTA, *Submission 72*, p. 17.

4.178   A number of submission and witnesses pointed out that bilingual children struggle with the year 3 NAPLAN testing in particular. However by high school the students are often on par or surpass students who learn English only:

> Again and again we have issues in the Northern Territory of literacy, reading and writing, and numeracy outcomes. The bilingual schools generally did not have NAPLAN scores in year 3 on par with the rest of Australia. That was because of the nature of bilingual education and the fact that they were being taught in their own language, rather than them being uneducated individuals, but by grade 5 generally the trend was that they came to par. So there are some unenviable political situations for the government in this issue because people are looking at NAPLAN tests and making observations based just on the NAPLAN tests.[98]

4.179   At a public hearing in Alice Springs, Wendy Baarda from Yuendemu made the following comments about the problems with NAPLAN for Indigenous students:

> The NAPLAN tests are very unsuitable for Aboriginal kids speaking a second language. I do not think English-speaking kids would do well either in NAPLAN tests if they were tested in a different language. At year 3 and year 5, how can they learn what those other kids have been learning all their lives in three years? It is impossible. The miracle is that we have one or two really linguistically gifted children every year who do actually get benchmark 1 in NAPLAN tests. In the last lot of testing, one of Barbara's grandchildren, who is in year 3, made it to benchmark, probably because she learns at home. NAPLAN tests are not suitable. They should have different tests for ESL learners.

> The other thing is, what they found with bilingual education in one of the Top End communities where people had a choice—they could learn bilingually or they could be in English class—is that the all-English ones did better on English in the early years, years 3 and 5, but in years 7 and 9 the bilingual ones were ahead. They had caught up and passed the other ones. But now it is all-English, mainly, and what they are reading does not have much meaning. For example, with Happy Little Dolphin there is not much in their lives that they can relate to, whereas they understand the Walpiri books completely. That is what literacy is about. It is about

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98   K Trudgen, *Committee Hansard,* Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 17.

> understanding. It is not just about the mechanics of reading. I do
> not think they are going to get better results in the long run—in
> the short term, maybe, but not for life and not for having kids who
> see their learning at school as related to life outside school. [99]

4.180   National Assessments undertaken at Year 3 through NAPLAN, are not
        applicable to Indigenous children who have their early education in their
        mother tongue. These children will not have advanced sufficiently in
        English to be able to participate at that level and will only measure what
        they cannot do, not what they can. [Experience in the N.T. before the
        disbanding of the Bilingual program, indicated that by Year 5,
        participation in National Assessments (prior to NAPLAN) was more
        appropriate].[100]

4.181   The Committee spoke to the principal, Ms Philomena Downey of the
        Aboriginal and Islander Independent Community School (AIICS) during a
        Brisbane public hearing. The AIICS commented on the push on numeracy
        and literacy for their school and noted the following:

> The school has long argued that results such as these do not give a
> true picture of individual children, particularly in our context. To
> explain: students may join our community at the beginning of any
> school year and as mentioned previously, often join us with a skill
> base not consistent with their age group. It is not possible to bridge
> gaps of up to seven years in a few months. That is not to say
> however, that individual students may have made significant
> gains.[101]

4.182   Most worrying is the anecdotal evidence that suggests NAPLAN can lead
        to disengagement in education:

> In addition to being misleading, in painting a negative portrait of
> learners, assessments that fail to take account of these issues
> impact negatively on learners' sense of worth and ongoing
> engagement with formal education.[102]

4.183   The Committee asked the teachers of Yirrkala whether NAPLAN testing
        should be in their own language. Ms Ganambarr, a teacher from Yirrkala
        school commented:

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99   W Baarda, *Committee Hansard*, Alice Springs, 4 April 2012, p. 45.

100 K Gale, B Graham and C Grimes, *Submission 19*, p. 5.

101 Aboriginal and Islander Independent Community School (AIICS), *Submission 133*, p. 2.

102 ACTA, *Submission 72*, p. 17.

Yes. That is a very good strategy for the children here because English is their second language. When students learn, they are able to unpack the big picture in their first language.[103]

Committee comment

4.184   The Committee notes the difficulties that are associated with NAPLAN testing for students who are learning English as an Additional Language. In the context of this inquiry the Committee understands that NAPLAN testing presents challenges for Indigenous students learning English as an additional language, especially for the year 3 testing when English language skills are still being introduced and practiced.

4.185   The Committee is satisfied that the studies demonstrate that Indigenous students can obtain NAPLAN results on par/or above that of English only learning students in the higher testing years. However the Committee remains concerned about the negative impact of early NAPLAN testing and this may contribute to engagement levels dropping off significantly when students transition into high school.

4.186   As the National Assessment Program is run at the direction of the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, the Committee believes that a review of NAPLAN testing should be undertaken to ensure all papers are culturally neutral so that questions can be clearly understood by all Australians.

4.187   Of great concern to the Committee is the evidence that suggests NAPLAN testing discourages Indigenous students and can lead to disengagement. The Committee encourages schools to undertake information sessions to provide students and the school community with a better understanding of NAPLAN and the purpose of NAPLAN results.

4.188   While NAPLAN aims to compile standardised data on student learning, this data has little value when English and non English speaking students results are not separated into different categories. It should be remembered that NAPLAN seeks to measure knowledge and skills across a range of competencies and language should not be a barrier to these assessments.

4.189   The Committee sees the benefits in NAPLAN tracking the progress of EAL/D students separately from mainstream students between years 3 and 5. It should be recognised that EAL/D learners will be usually on a different learning pathway from first language learners when learning the

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103   B Ganambarr, Yirrkala School, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 11.

target language in the initial years of education. It must be emphasised that students learning more than one language usually catch up and can surpass students learning English only.

4.190   The Committee considers that ACARA should develop an alternative assessment tool for all students identified as EAL/D learners for the Year 3 and Year 5 assessment in particular. In addition, the Committee believes this alternative testing tool would have positive benefits for all EAL/D students' confidence in learning.

Recommendation 15 – NAPLAN alternative assessment tool

4.191   **The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to develop a National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) alternative assessment tool for all students learning English as an Additional Language/Dialect.**

5

Teaching Indigenous languages

5.1   As discussed in the previous chapter, schools are a resource and a venue for whole communities. They are a place where families, teachers and children come together in a learning environment. Teachers, Assistant Teachers, Cultural Advisors and other community members have been and continue to be vital ingredients in the teaching of Indigenous languages and culture and in the broader education of children in Indigenous communities.

5.2   This chapter discusses the training and qualifications required to teach Indigenous languages and the career and accreditation pathways available to Indigenous language teachers. The Committees discusses the important role Indigenous language teachers play in the classroom, especially in schools with high numbers of Indigenous students with EAL/D needs, and the need to attract and retain Indigenous language teachers. The Committee discusses EAL/D and cultural training required by teachers.

Career and accreditation pathways for Indigenous language teachers

Indigenous language teaching courses

5.3   The availability of training for qualifications to teach Indigenous languages is scattered across the country and is offered at a variety of Certificate, Degree, Diploma and Masters levels.

5.4   Examples of Certificate level courses in Indigenous languages are:

- In South Australia, the Murray Bridge TAFE offers Certificates I, II and III in Learning an Endangered Aboriginal Language. The aim of the

2011 class was for the TAFE to continue to offer this course and in addition offer a Certificate IV in Teaching an Endangered Aboriginal Language to 'give students the confidence and qualifications to go on and teach the Ngarrindjeri language to others, either in the TAFE sector or in schools or other institutions or just at home with family'.[1] Dr Mary-Anne Gale, a TAFE SA lecturer, asserted that there is a huge demand among Aboriginal community members, from both strong languages as well as languages under revival, for further language training and called for further funding and support for TAFE courses such as those offered at Murray Bridge[2]

- TAFE NSW has developed three nationally-recognised qualifications in Aboriginal Languages at Certificate I, II and III levels. Each of the qualifications can be customised to deliver training in any Aboriginal language, following consultation with and permissions from Elders and/or knowledge-holders in the local community. As at 31 December 2010, Aboriginal course enrolments totalled 532 across all three qualifications for Aboriginal Languages such as, Kamilaroi and Wiradjuri,[3] and

- the Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative has joined with the North Coast Institute of TAFE to offer a Certificate I in the Gathang language. Ms Anna Ash, a Coordinator-Linguist with the Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre, stated that 45 students were expected to graduate with a Certificate I during 2012. The course had attracted people from a variety of backgrounds, including teachers, Aboriginal Education Assistants, people with an interest in language, Elders, and Year 11/12 students. Gathang people who are qualified can teach the language in school classrooms. The Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre supports and has developed dictionaries for about seven Indigenous languages in NSW and hopes to offer a Certificate I next year in the Yaygirr language.[4]

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1   Teachers and Students of Cert III in Learning Endangered Aboriginal Language, Murray Bridge TAFE, South Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 5.

2   Teachers and Students of Cert III in Learning Endangered Aboriginal Language, Murray Bridge TAFE, South Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 10.

3   New South Wales Department of Education and Communities, *Submission 59*, p. 17.

4   A Ash, Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2012, pp. 25 and 29.

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

5.5   The Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) is a tertiary education provider that services the education, training and research needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The BIITE offers a range of courses aligned to employment opportunities in remote Australia and to support the establishment of stronger, safer and healthier communities - from preparatory courses to Vocational Education and Training (VET) certificates, diploma level courses, higher education degrees, and postgraduate research programs.

5.6   Relevant VET courses that are available at BIITE include:

- Certificate I and Certificate II in Indigenous Language and Knowledge Work - These courses provide a qualification for employment as assistant language workers in community language centres, school language programs, interpreting and various other community based language areas. These courses enable the speakers of Indigenous languages to participate more fully in employment and community activities, developing skills that are readily transportable to a range of work contexts. The targeted participants in these courses are people who speak an Indigenous language and who are regarded as knowledge holders within their community or family network. Typically this cohort comprises mature people who have lived in remote settings for most of their lives, and

- Certificate III and Certificate IV and Diploma in Education Support -These courses provide the skills and knowledge required to work in schools as assistant teachers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers. The courses cover a broad range of aspects of the work in classrooms and schools. To be accepted into the courses all students must be employed by, or have access to, a school or educational workplace where they can undertake the on-the-job components of the course. The school through the school principal must be prepared to commit to a program being run in their school in partnership between BIITE and the school.

5.7   The higher education undergraduate programs of BIITE are delivered in partnership with Charles Darwin University (CDU). In 2011 BIITE entered into a collaborative partnership with CDU to establish the Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledges and Education (ACIKE) for the shared delivery of a range of higher education and postgraduate study options which address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. ACIKE delivery began in semester one of 2012.

5.8   Relevant courses offered by ACIKE in 2012 include:

- Diploma of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledges

- Bachelor of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advocacy

- Bachelor of Indigenous Languages and Linguistics

- Bachelor of Teaching and Learning (Pre Service)

- Bachelor of Teaching and Learning Early Childhood

- Bachelor of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledges (Honours)

- Graduate Certificate of Indigenous Education

- Graduate Certificate in Yolngu Studies, and

- Graduate Diploma of Indigenous Knowledges.[5]

Koori Centre, University of Sydney

5.9   The Master of Indigenous Language Education course is offered through the Koori Centre at the University of Sydney. The aim of the course is to sponsor qualified Indigenous teachers, working in NSW schools, to undertake specialist language retraining in order to teach NSW Aboriginal languages in NSW public schools and support the learning needs of students in Aboriginal languages. The course is delivered in an away-from-base mode over three one-week blocks each semester for one year. It is delivered flexibly through block release. Teachers remain in their work settings and carry out their usual teaching duties during the period of retraining. No language proficiency is required prior to undertaking the course.[6]

5.10   The course accepts people who are part way through completing a degree qualification. Mr John Hobson from the University of Sydney explained that the course had granted provisional entry into the masters course to graduates of two years of teacher training:

> They can do the first semester and graduate with a certificate, or if they perform to a credit level across all the four units of study they can enter the masters. We can have the anomalous situation of

5   ACIKE, Courses available in 2012 <www.cdu.edu.au/acike/courses-and-programs> viewed 8 August 2012.
6   New South Wales Department of Education and Communities, *Submission 59*, p. 15.

somebody who has only two years training towards a teacher qualification graduating from us with a masters..[7]

5.11 Mr Hobson informed the Committee that there is currently no entry-level teacher qualification that has national recognition for appointment to a designated language teacher position in a school. The Master of Indigenous Languages Education is recognised only by the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities for appointment to a designated languages teacher positions in New South Wales.[8]

Limited authority to teach

5.12 A nationally recognised Indigenous languages teacher qualification would allow those trained teachers to move and work across jurisdictions. However, many people have an ambition to teach only their own language; they do not necessarily want a four year teaching degree that allows them to teach in other subject areas. One assistant teacher at the Alice Springs Languages Centre was happy to remain an assistant teacher rather than go through further study to become a qualified classroom teacher.[9]

5.13 A limited authority to teach, such as exists in Western Australia, is based on two years of training and permits people to teach their language in their local school. Elders or recognised speakers of the language are delegated authority to certify the adequacy of prospective teachers' fluency. Mrs Lola Jones, the Aboriginal Languages Coordinator-Curriculum Officer with the Western Australian Department of Education is responsible for running the state wide Aboriginal languages teacher training. She explained the training program in Western Australia:

> The training grew out of a need for Aboriginal people to be able to get a qualification within the department. People who have completed the training are recognised as teachers, have a limited authority to teach as a language teacher and are paid as teachers. It has provided a career pathway for Aboriginal people in WA education department.[10]

7   J Hobson, University of Sydney, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 18 November 2011, p. 32.

8   J Hobson, University of Sydney, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 18 November 2011, p. 32.

9   D Castel, Alice Springs Language Centre, *Committee Hansard*, Alice Springs, 4 April 2012, p. 46.

10 L Jones, Western Australian Department of Education, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 9.

5.14   Mr Hobson advocated for a national policy statement to guide teacher accreditation bodies on limited authorities to teach, perhaps based on two years of training, as is the case in Western Australia:

> I think—a declaration, as I said, of national policy that we need a structure of things like limited authorities to teach. We need flexibility in recognition of teacher fluency and in recognition that different languages are at different stages in the maximum level of fluency that any person could possibly have.[11]

5.15   While the Western Australian initiative is well supported, the state government department is unable to find a university to conduct the training course. Mrs Jones stated that the Western Australian Aboriginal languages teacher training is an anomaly because all professional learning is run by herself through the Professional Learning Institute:

> There does not seem to be anybody else out there who can run the training, so at the moment I am still running the training. We are looking at universities to take on the training, which needs someone to teach the methodology aspect of language teaching, someone to teach the IT skills for making digital resources but you also need somebody who has the linguistics skills to support language speakers.[12]

5.16   Mrs Jones stated that Indigenous languages teacher training needs to continue. However, the universities were concerned that the numbers of student were too small to make it viable.[13]

5.17   Mrs Faith Baisden from the Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group (ESALG) supported fast tracking registered teaching status for community teachers through universities, which could reduce school expenses of requiring more than one teacher in a classroom:

> ... the fact that there must be a registered teacher in the class and that puts such an expense on the education system having to have the registered teacher and then the community teacher in the classroom as well. We are trying to talk to the providers of training for the teachers to fast-track registered teaching status for community teachers. They may know their language but let us get them to the point where they can become regular teachers as well.

11   J Hobson, University of Sydney, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 18 November 2011, p. 32.
12   L Jones, Western Australian Department of Education, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 9.
13   L Jones, Western Australian Department of Education, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 12.

> Then we say to regular teachers, would you like to learn language and EAL as well.[14]

Committee comment

5.18   In many cases and for a variety of reasons, Indigenous people will not complete full teaching degree qualifications.

5.19   The Committee commends the Western Australian government for the development of the limited authority to teach qualification being offered to Indigenous language teachers. This qualification allows Indigenous language teachers a qualification to be able to teach in a school classroom without the requirement of having a full teaching degree. The Committee believes this is a sound initiative and would like to see it developed in other jurisdictions.

5.20   The Western Australian initiative has several benefits. The limited authority to teach would not replace the need for more fully qualified Indigenous teachers, but the flexibility of the qualification would enable the schools to harness language expertise of local communities and provide employment opportunities for those committed to their local community and not seeking a national qualification.

5.21   Further, there should be clear pathways to full teacher qualifications and access to strategies such as master-apprentice schemes, as recommended later in this chapter.

5.22   The Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood comprises of state, territory and Commonwealth Ministers with responsibility for these areas. This Council is ideally placed to develop incentives and greater opportunities for Indigenous language teacher training.

Recommendation 16 - Limited authority to teach

5.23   **The Committee recommends the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood and teacher training authorities to develop a national framework of flexible and accessible training for Indigenous people to gain limited authority qualifications to teach.**

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14   F Baisden, ESALG, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2011, p. 14.

5.24   The Committee notes the difficulty the Western Australian Government is having with finding a university to conduct the limited authority to teach course. Currently the course is being run by a dedicated officer within the Department of Education.

5.25   The Committee believes governments at all levels should work with higher education authorities to develop strategies to provide incentives for universities to offer Indigenous language teacher training courses.

Recommendation 17 - Indigenous language teacher training

5.26   **The Committee recommends the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to develop incentives for teacher training institutions to offer Indigenous language teacher training, such as a limited authority qualification to teach.**

Accessible teacher training

5.27   Numerous participants to the inquiry supported greater accessibility to teacher training. For example, Dr Brian Devlin from Charles Darwin University claimed that teacher training is not accessible to many remote Indigenous residents. Dr Devlin wrote in his submission that undertaking training in Darwin or Alice Springs is not an option for many local people who have young children or cannot live away from their partner/family for cultural reasons.[15]

5.28   Some witnesses referred to the benefits of the Remote Area Teacher Education (RATE) program which was offered by BIITE until the late 1990s and supported a lecturer in some growth towns working with assistant teachers towards gaining a qualification.

5.29   Ms Margaret Carew, a linguist working at BIITE, stated that qualified Indigenous teachers who studied through the RATE program are ageing and there is not the same number of qualified teachers coming through the system. Ms Carew believed that those people who once would have trained as teachers under the RATE program instead train as Indigenous education workers by completing certificate level training and getting paid at a lower levels and having less say in the school. Ms Carew

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15   B Devlin, *Submission 81*, p. 8.

believed there should be more community development and flexibility in teacher training and qualifications. Ms Carew related a story of an Indigenous literacy worker with many years experience:

> A fabulous irony that I observed involved a woman I know, who has never been a qualified teacher but who has worked for many years, since the late sixties, as a literacy worker. She is a highly fluent writer of her first language and a fluent speaker of course of a number of languages of the area. She qualified a couple of years ago through Batchelor as a Certificate III as an Indigenous education worker. I thought there was a kind of sad irony in that that is about as far as she has got, and she does not even live in Maningrida anymore; she lives in Darwin. So there has been a disenfranchisement.[16]

5.30   The Committee received evidence of unhappiness around the merger between BIITE and CDU. Some witnesses were concerned that there would be less accessibility and support for students in higher education courses, particularly for Indigenous people living in remote areas.

5.31   Ms Janine Oldfield, a lecturer at BIITE in Alice Springs spoke of decline in numbers of student enrolments in the higher education courses. Ms Oldfield attributed some of the reduction in enrolment numbers to the barriers around online enrolment and insufficient marketing of courses offered:

> We do not appear to have any new enrolments; we think there is a complication with the enrolment status. People have to do online enrolment, which is quite difficult for remote people. It is a very complicated enrolment process. I find it extraordinarily difficult; I can barely get through it myself. It is not well advertised. People do not know anything about ACIKE, so it is not attracting people. People do not even know Batchelor is still doing higher ed[ucation]. Remote areas are being told by schools and principals that there is no Batchelor higher ed[ucation] anymore. So at this stage we are seeing a drastic reduction in numbers.[17]

5.32   At the public hearing in Darwin, Dr Laughren agreed that there is no incentive or invitation for remote Aboriginal people to do teacher training.[18]

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16   M Carew, *Committee Hansard*, Alice Springs, 4 April 2012, pp. 10-11.

17   J Oldfield, BIITE, *Committee Hansard*, Alice Springs, 4 April 2012, p. 1.

18   M Laughren, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 47.

5.33   Ms Claire Kilgariff from the BIITE acknowledged that numbers of students enrolled in the higher education had diminished during 2012 as they moved into the ACIKE partnership. However, Ms Kilgariff believed those numbers would increase as the ACIKE brand becomes better known and students understand the courses on offer.[19]

5.34   Ms Kilgariff stated that the BIITE was in a difficult financial state and that economic sustainability was part of the reason to push a partnership with CDU. However, it was clarified at the public hearing in Darwin that BIITE is now in a healthy financial state. Ms Kilgariff stated that BIITE is working to ensure that it is still able to supply the same level of support for its students and that its staff are able to provide the same level of commitment:

> Whilst our two institutions are partnered together, the students are still able to choose to study in the Batchelor mode, as we call it. That means they are able to attend workshops at Batchelor and then have online support and then come back to Batchelor for a final workshop. At first, when the partnership was proposed, there was a strong anxiety that students would not still be able to study in that environment of cultural safety where they would be Indigenous only students. We have very strongly maintained that, even to the extent that, in online environments, we have been very determined and passionate about ensuring that the students are in an Indigenous only environment. If they choose to they can actually enter into the larger student body environment but they are actually get the choice whether to do that.[20]

School release for teacher training

5.35   Some witnesses referred to the benefits of education departments encouraging the professional development of their Indigenous language teachers and supporting their release from schools for further development and qualifications. Ms Lola Jones from the Western Australian Department of Education stated that the department supports the release of language teachers to undertake further study:

> The department has just organised through one of the universities that, if language teachers decide to go on and do a full teaching degree, while they are on teaching prac their school gets teacher relief paid. While they do their block releases their school gets

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19   C Kilgariff, BIITE, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 59.
20   C Kilgariff, BIITE, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 61.

> teacher relief. And it also means that they stay on salary while they are doing their study. A teacher at one of the high schools in the Goldfields is currently studying at Curtin University. When she goes away for five weeks of block release she still gets paid; her school gets a relief teacher provided. That is encouraging our language teachers to gain a full degree as a classroom teacher.[21]

5.36 Another example is the Yipirinya School in Central Australia which gives incentives to its Indigenous staff to study at BIITE to gain certification and qualifications. Mr Lance Box from the Yipirinya School stated:

> We have actually had one of our staff members go through and qualify as a classroom teacher. She was teaching in our school until she had to leave due to pregnancy. She will be back. We have another two teachers who have recently enrolled in a diploma of teaching course. Hopefully, in three or four years time they will be qualified teachers. ... They are currently studying through Batchelor Institute and currently work as assistant teachers in our school.[22]

5.37 The principal of Arlparra School in the Utopia Homelands felt privileged to work in a school where all assistant teachers were supported to undertake further studies.[23]

5.38 In New South Wales Aboriginal teachers are able to apply for sponsorship from the Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate for HECS contributions and relief payments to attend study blocks in order to complete the postgraduate Master of Indigenous Language Education program.[24]

5.39 In contrast, the Committee received some evidence that teachers are unable to be released from their workplaces to take further study in teaching Indigenous languages.[25] Mrs Anna Ash from Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative (MALCC) in NSW believed the education departments should provide greater support for teacher release for training and development.[26]

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21 L Jones, Western Australian Department of Education, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 10.

22 L Box, Yipirinya School, *Committee Hansard*, Alice Springs, 4 April 2012, p. 25.

23 K Kasmira, Arlparra School, *Committee Hansard*, Utopia Homelands, 3 April 2012, p. 8.

24 New South Wales Department of Education and Communities, *Submission 59*, p. 13.

25 Teachers and Students of Cert III in Learning Endangered Aboriginal Language, Murray Bridge, TAFE SA, *Submission 18*, p. 5.

26 A Ash, Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2012, p. 28.

Coaching and mentoring Indigenous language teachers

5.40   Witnesses referred to the importance of ongoing in-school support, such as coaching and mentoring, for Indigenous teachers.[27] Mr Peter Williams from the MALCC in New South Wales supported in-service training by language experts for assistant teachers:

> Language is being taught in primary and high schools in a whole of the areas and we are stretched to the limit as far as teachers go. We feel if we can teach people like teachers aides in-service they can help in the classroom. We know they are pretty much burdened with what they do and this will be just a little more, but then they would be a bit more qualified and therefore their pay scales can go up.[28]

5.41   In the Kimberley in Western Australia, teacher trainees are observed and given in-school support depending on what their needs are. Mrs Jones spoke of the importance of language teachers having mentors who might be language teachers, elders or language specialists. Mrs Jones stated that language teachers must work through the complexities of ensuring their teaching is culturally and age appropriate and linguistically correct. Mrs Jones believed the master-apprentice model, whereby a fluent speaker, a master, works with a partial speaker, an apprentice, can be effective in-service support for language teachers.[29]

5.42   The importance of language teachers having strong relationships with the language speakers was reinforced:

> Old people were multilingual and they carried those languages, and we do not want to be messing them up now because we are saying it wrong. Sometimes when you are reviving a language it is really hard because the grammar of the language is very different from English. So you want to make sure you are getting it right, and that is a hard thing for our language teachers.[30]

5.43   The New South Wales government supported the establishment of master-apprentice schemes to encourage an increase in the number of language

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27   K Lowe, New South Wales Board of Studies, *Committee Hansard*, 18 November 2011, p. 41; Warlpiri Patu Kurlangu Jaru, *Submission 121*, p. 10.

28   P Williams, A Ash, Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2012, p. 28.

29   L Jones, Western Australian Department of Education, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 11.

30   L Jones, Western Australian Department of Education, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 11.

teachers, and the implementation of succession training for the long term sustainability of language learning programs.[31] Ms Carew, a linguist at BIITE, supported further evaluation of the merits of the master-apprentice model as a way of supporting advocacy and networking of key people working in Indigenous languages areas.[32]

5.44   Margaret Florey from the Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity stated that the master-apprentice model has 'worked with great effect in other parts of the world' to revitalise languages.[33]

Committee comment

5.45   The Committee recognises there is a desperate need for more Indigenous language teachers throughout Australia. Indigenous people who have the ambition to become qualified teachers and specialist teachers must have accessibility to training to further their career. This will require a greater degree of flexibility from schools as well as training institutions.

5.46   In some circumstances state and territory governments are supporting schools to release teacher assistants to attend further studies. The Committee supports the efforts by state and territory governments to make language teaching qualifications more accessible.

5.47   However, the Committee heard that some schools are reluctant to release Indigenous language teachers for training and development. The Committee considers that training and development is essential and needs to be valued and prioritised by education departments in all jurisdictions.

5.48   Ongoing in-school mentoring and coaching is an important aspect of developing the skills of an Indigenous language teacher. The Committee encourages the states and territories to support the coaching and mentoring of teachers by Indigenous language experts.

5.49   In addition, the Committee views the master-apprentice model as an effective way to provide further development for Indigenous language teachers in schools. The use of the master-apprentice model in schools would have the added effect of encouraging the maintenance and revival of Indigenous languages where there are a limited number of fluent speakers.

31   NSW Government, *Submission 98*, p. 4.

32   M Carew, *Committee Hansard*, Alice Springs, 4 April 2012, pp. 11-12.

33   M Florey, Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity (RNLD), *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 February 2012, p. 10.

Recommendation 18 - Indigenous language teachers - training and career pathways

5.50   **The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to develop strategies for training Indigenous language teachers to improve access to qualifications, full accreditation and career pathways as well as providing school support and mentorship where required.**

Recommendation 19 – Master-apprentice schemes

5.51   **The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education work through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood to give consideration to establishing master-apprentice schemes in schools to provide in-service support for Indigenous language teachers.**

Attracting and retaining Indigenous teachers

5.52   A majority of regional and remote schools have difficulty in attracting and retaining teachers. One of the proposed solutions is to encourage Indigenous people from communities to train as teachers.

5.53   Some witnesses asserted that, in many cases, Indigenous teachers will remain in their communities to teach, providing communities with some continuity in qualified staff who can speak the first language. Conversely, non Indigenous teachers in regional and remote schools tend to remain in communities for shorter periods.

5.54   Professor Jane Simpson spoke of the benefits of investing in training Indigenous teachers at BIITE:

> ... it would be well worth investing heavily in places like Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. The really important thing, particularly for remote communities, is having teachers who are prepared to stay there for more than a year. I think the only way you will get that is through training local Indigenous people, supporting Batchelor college in recruiting teachers from remote

> areas and giving those teachers EAL training. That would be a
> really excellent investment.[34]

5.55   The retention rate of teachers in remote areas of the Northern Territory
        has been around six to seven months. Under the Northern Territory
        Emergency Response, the Commonwealth Government was engaged with
        the Northern Territory Government in recruiting 200 additional teachers
        for remote schools in the Northern Territory by the end of 2012. The
        retention rate of teachers in remote communities improved since the
        additional teachers were recruited as there has been a focus on recruiting
        and retaining quality teachers in remote areas.[35]

5.56   Under the *Quality Teaching and Enhancing Literacy* measure, the
        Commonwealth Government committed $44.3 million over three years
        (2009-10 to 2011-12) to Northern Territory education providers to develop
        career pathways for Indigenous staff, increase the number of Indigenous
        staff with education qualifications, and provide support and programs to
        enable teachers and students achieve improved outcomes in literacy and
        numeracy in 73 targeted remote communities.[36]

5.57   The Northern Territory Government asserted that one of the biggest issues
        in teaching in Indigenous communities is that they do not have enough
        qualified Indigenous teachers who speak both Standard Australian
        English (SAE) and Indigenous languages. Through the *Local Teachers in
        Local Schools* initiative the Northern Territory Government has set a target
        of 200 additional Indigenous teachers by the year 2018.[37]

5.58   The *Local Teachers in Local Schools* initiative aims to address some of the
        challenges of recruiting and retaining quality teaching staff for remote
        communities by assisting Indigenous students to become teachers, with a
        focus on encouraging them to stay at school longer and to consider a
        career in teaching. This includes mentoring senior secondary students,
        particularly in very remote Indigenous schools.[38]

5.59   At the public hearing in Darwin, Minister McCarthy from the Northern
        Territory Government, told the Committee there are 115 Indigenous

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34   J Simpson, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 9 February 2012, p. 2.

35   S Goodwin, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR),
     Committee Hansard, Canberra, 1 March 2012, pp. 7-8.

36   DEEWR, *Submission 131*, p. 19.

37   G Barnes, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, 2 May 2012, Darwin, p. 4.

38   Northern Territory Government, 'Territory 2030 Strategic Plan, Data Snapshots'
     <www.territory2030.nt.gov.au/documents/snapshots/pdf/ED3.1.pdf> viewed
     15 August 2012.

teachers working in DET schools and 51 Indigenous Territorians being supported to study teacher education through various programs.[39]

Recognising the value of Indigenous teachers

5.60   Indigenous teachers working in schools have completed different levels of teaching qualifications. Teachers and assistant teachers and are considered essential elements of school staff by communities and local schools. The Yiripinya School in Central Australia, which teaches four of the central desert languages, employs Indigenous staff as teachers, assistant teachers, council members and various ancillary positions.[40]

5.61   In the Aboriginal and Islander Independent Community School in Acacia Ridge in Queensland where there are high numbers of Indigenous staff, attendance rates of students are higher than average.[41]

5.62   Mr John Bradbury, who worked on numeracy projects in remote schools with high Indigenous populations in the Northern Territory for six years, argued that investing in assistant teachers helps to create a sustainable resource. A finding of the projects was that an equal partnership between the classroom teacher and the assistant teacher was essential and helped to achieve better outcomes for students. Mr Bradbury stated that there was very positive feedback from the assistant teachers, the schools and the local community about the community engagement and community empowerment that was happening.[42]

5.63   Ms Kerry Kasmira, the Principal at Arlparra School in Utopia Homelands, emphasised the value of Indigenous assistant teachers who speak and understand English and the local Indigenous language:

> Without exception, our assistant teachers have far more professional diversity than any of the white teachers here, in terms of being able to address the needs of the students.[43]

5.64   Many witnesses referred to the important role local Indigenous teachers play in teaching children their contact language as well as Standard

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39   M McCarthy, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 2.

40   L Box, Yiripinya School, *Committee Hansard*, Alice Springs, 4 April 2012, p. 24.

41   P Downey, Aboriginal and Islander Independent Community School Inc., *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2012, p. 34.

42   J Bradbury, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, pp. 6-5.

43   K Kasmira, Arlparra School, *Committee Hansard*, Utopia Homelands, 3 April 2012, p. 6.

Australian English (SAE).[44] Mr Richard Trudgen relayed a conversation with Indigenous Elders who believed they could read, write and speak English well because they were taught by teachers who spoke their first language well.[45]

5.65   Mrs Nyoka Hatfield talked about her own experiences teaching Dharumbal language and culture in Queensland schools:

> I have never had any teacher training or education. I am lucky because the teachers that I do come up with say that I have a gift. And I am thankful that I have that gift. I know that a lot of other Indigenous people on their own country will not have that gift. But there are also a lot who will have it and will be able to connect with the children and interact with them the way that I do. I suppose that I am looking at it from the perspective of not having teacher training or being teachers.
>
> ... I suppose that I could have gone and had that training. I had the opportunity. But I thought that I did not have the time, as what I wanted to do needed to be done now. I had to get into those schools and do things now, because you never know what is going to happen. For myself, it just comes from my experience and my knowledge of my culture and my language. That is the capacity in which I go into the schools.[46]

5.66   The New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Education and Communities supported strategies to ensure that community based language teachers receive appropriate wages, conditions of employment, accreditation and support, which is commensurate with the expertise and valuable role they fulfil in language learning:

> There is no acknowledgment of prior learning for the significant cultural knowledge that these language speakers bring into the classroom. The lack of an adequate wage for community language teachers is compounded by insecurity of employment, with a lack of permanency in language teaching positions. Standard employment conditions such as sick leave entitlements and

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44   V Garrawurra, Shepherdson College, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 50; A Ash, Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative, *Committee Hansard,* Brisbane, 6 October 2012, p. 27.

45   R Trudgen, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 19.

46   N Hatfield, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2011, p. 9.

professional training are not accessible for community language teachers.[47]

5.67   Mrs Jones from the Western Australian Department of Education spoke of the special skills a qualified Indigenous languages teacher brings to a school and should be paid more than classroom teachers:

> I see that they are the top of the heap, because you have to have not only all the skills of a teacher but also the language skills. Most of our language teachers only want to teach language; they are not interested in science and social studies and all those other things. There are lots of non-Aboriginal teachers who can teach that, or Aboriginal teachers who do not speak their language, who do not come from that area. Aboriginal teachers who graduate as language teachers have all the teaching and reporting responsibilities that other teachers have. ...
>
> I think language teachers should be paid more than classroom teachers, because they have got double skills. It is not just the teaching; you have also got the language component.[48]

5.68   Other participants in the inquiry argued for a review of pay scales for Indigenous language teachers which include recognition of language knowledge and accreditation at a range of levels.[49] Ms Ash from MALCC supported pay scales which value and recognise people who have completed various levels of training and qualifications:

> Various departments of education need to recognise the importance of those people, pay scales need to be developed, positions need to be created. A couple of the Gumbanynggir teachers are very well qualified. They might have a masters in the Indigenous language education, but they are being employed on a casual basis across several schools. They have no job security and no holiday pay. It is disgusting that people are so neglected. Maybe the education departments have to be alerted to some of the problems and made to realise that it is essential that they deal with this situation.[50]

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47   Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales and Department of Education and Communities, *Submission 98*, pp. 3 and 12-13.

48   L Jones, Western Australian Department of Education, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 10.

49   Queensland Indigenous Languages Advisory Committee, *Submission 82*, p. 4; ESALG, *Submission 25*, p. 5.

50   A Ash, Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2012, p. 28.

Committee comment

5.69   The evidence clearly demonstrated that schools place high value on the work of Indigenous teachers, whether they are qualified at teacher or assistant teacher level. School principals and other school staff recognise the value of the language and cultural knowledge that Indigenous assistant teachers bring to the classroom.

5.70   The Committee believes that there is a need for more Indigenous teachers in schools and better recognition of the work they do. In language learning classrooms it is important to have a mix of qualified teachers, teacher assistants, volunteers, and fluent language speakers.

5.71   Attracting and retaining people to Indigenous language teacher positions is a challenging prospect, especially in remote areas, and governments are implementing programs to support more Indigenous teaching positions. The Committee believes that valuing and recognising the work of Indigenous teachers will go a long way towards attracting and retaining teachers.

5.72   Many assistant teachers come to school without formal qualifications. However, Indigenous teachers have the cultural and language knowledge that is an important ingredient in the mix of teaching staff.

5.73   As previously stated, the Committee believes teacher training should be accessible and offered at different qualification levels. Pay scales should reflect the skills and value that Indigenous teachers bring to the classroom. The Committee stresses there should be clear career pathways to full teaching accreditation available.

5.74   The Committee notes that the Western Australian Department of Education is paying teachers who gain the limited authority to teach qualification with the equivalent salary of a fully qualified teacher.

5.75   The Committee encourages all state and territory governments to review pay scales for Indigenous assistant teachers and any expansion of the limited authority to teach positions, in order to ensure the scales adequately reflect the skills these teachers bring to the schools.

Indigenous language teaching resources

5.76   Resources need to be available in languages which are being taught in school. In many Indigenous languages those resources may be scarce.

Owing to the diversity of Indigenous languages there have not been sufficient resources produced to teach some languages.

5.77   Many language programs have small budgets and the Committee heard numerous times about people working in the field voluntarily in order to save their language. The Eastern States Indigenous Languages Group called for an 'urgent injection of funds into the development of resources'.[51]

5.78   Despite these funding challenges several resources for teaching Indigenous languages were shown to the Committee throughout Australia. The Committee was impressed with the range of hard copy language learning resources, including:

■   Gumbaynggirr Dictionary and Learner's Grammar, and several other language work books and Dreamtime stories by Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative, Nambucca Heads, New South Wales

■   Children's booklets using both Dharumbal language and English, by Nicky Hatfield and the Gidarjil Corporation, Rockhampton, Queensland

■   Stories and children's readers in numerous languages produced by Papulu Apparr-Kari Language Corporation, Tennant Creek, Northern Territory, and

■   Language learning resources including playing cards and flash cards in Yawuru, by Nyamba Buru Yawuru, Broome, Western Australia.

5.79   Dr Marmion from Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (AIATSIS) stated that, with assistance, schools can produce their own materials.[52] Dr Robert Jackson from the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) referred to resources which are being produced locally in communities, however Indigenous languages teachers and students do not have access to resources in some Indigenous language:

I am aware of some very good resources that have been produced, but they are being produced for local solutions, local communities. ... Again, with a lot of Aboriginal students you are looking at a language that does not have a print form, a written form. That is another overlay. You need to then transcribe the language, have a

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51   Eastern States Indigenous Languages Group, *Submission 25*, p. 5.

52   D Marmion, AIATSIS, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 7 July 2011, p. 6.

written version of the language, and then get the student used to the idea that language occurs both in an oral form and in a print-based form. That is another step.[53]

5.80   Mrs Lola Jones from the Western Australian Department of Education stated one of the major issues with teaching Indigenous languages is the need to produce resources:

> We currently have 20 Aboriginal languages taught in 55 department schools in Western Australia, but you cannot go and buy a Walmajarri or a Yawuru set of resources. So resource production was one of our biggest areas as well as training people.[54]

5.81   She explained that it became necessary to start producing resources in Indigenous languages and the Western Australian Department of Education is using different technologies to create resources such as digital dictionaries:

> We started with handdrawn and handwritten materials, and then photocopiers came along and we had blackline masters and we thought we were really flash. Now we have digital images and we have digital resources and we can display our books and materials on interactive whiteboards. So we have really come from the draw-it-yourself and do-it-yourself age to the digital age. One of the others mentioned that they are working with the Lexique Pro dictionary, which is an interactive dictionary on the computer. We are running training for a couple of languages at the moment for teachers to input data into Lexique Pro dictionaries so that kids in school have more access to digital dictionaries.[55]

5.82   Other states and territories are using technologies to produce resources. The Northern Territory Department of Education and Training is contributing $160 000 to the Living Archives of Aboriginal Languages project that will digitise and create a computer archive of publications in more than 16 Northern Territory-Australian Indigenous languages. The Northern Territory Library has developed several resources concentrating

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53   R Jackson, ACTA, *Committee Hansard*, 18 November 2011, Sydney, p. 27.
54   L Jones, Western Australian Department of Education, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 9.
55   L Jones, Western Australian Department of Education, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 9.

on early childhood programs and preserving languages in books and using multimedia resources such as iPads. [56]

5.83   The issue of ownership of copyright of resources has been highlighted by participants in the inquiry. Mrs Faith Baisden from the ESALG described a situation in which a community teacher had produced resources with a school and the Department of Education and Training took ownership of those resources. Mrs Baisden claimed that this causes anxiety for people who put their language information into those resources only to have the government hold copyright on it. Mrs Baisden supported communities producing material and selling it:

> Another thing we would like to say about resources is: wouldn't it be great to support communities to produce their own and sell them back to the departments? That would be a way of capacity building, business building and helping the communities make their own and sell them back and you will not have that issue.[57]

5.84   The NSW Board of Studies referred to the recognition deserved by Indigenous people who work to teach language and produce resources for use in schools:

> There are many cases where community members have devoted years of effort to developing their own skills in the local language, producing resources and teaching, often for little payment, only to see the program disappear because of a change of classroom teacher or school principal. This is particularly dispiriting for the Aboriginal people who typically remain in their community year after year, while school personnel tend to move on quite regularly.[58]

Committee comment

5.85   The Committee has considered the long term establishment of a library of Indigenous language resources. New technologies are the way forward to produce a multitude of cost-effective resources for teaching in the many Indigenous languages across the country. Resources produced with new technologies could be transferred more easily across jurisdictions and in different Indigenous languages. In Chapter 7 the Committee discusses

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56   M McCarthy, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, pp. 2-3.

57   F Baisden, Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2011, pp. 16-17.

58   New South Wales Board of Studies, *Submission 73*, p. 9.

archiving and storing Indigenous language resources for future generations.

5.86   The Committee recognises the considerable work, expertise and passion behind producing the books, posters, CDs, audio visuals, databases and other resources by language centres, community members, elders and linguists. It is important that these resources are available to schools and teachers as part of the teaching resources.

5.87   Government education departments need to understand and respect community attachment to and the cultural significance of the language resources being produced, and work with the schools to ensure that relevant Indigenous language resources are included in schools where possible.

5.88   The Committee encourages better partnerships and coordination between schools, language centres and other community groups in terms of sharing Indigenous resources and facilitating Indigenous language learning within schools.

5.89   The Committee considers that language resources funded by the Indigenous Language Support (ILS) program and produced by language centres and communities should be available to be shared with local schools for the mutual benefit of teachers and students and the revitalisation and maintenance of the language.

Recommendation 20 - Sharing language teaching resources

5.90   **The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government amend the Indigenous Language Support (ILS) program funding criteria to ensure that language materials produced with ILS program support should, where practical and culturally appropriate, be available to be shared with schools and educational institutions as a teaching resource, with proper acknowledgment of its creators.**

EAL/D training

5.91   The Committee received a significant amount of evidence that teachers in Indigenous communities require training in teaching English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D). As discussed earlier, for many Indigenous students English is not their first language and they may

communicate to varying degrees across a range of Indigenous and contact languages. Many participants in the inquiry referred to the need for all teachers to have some experience and a sound knowledge of how to teach EAL/D, particularly when the school has a high number of students with EAL/D.[59]

5.92   Miss Claire Gorman, a former teacher and current Queensland Department of Education and Training (Queensland DET) representative, discussed the importance of developing knowledge in teaching EAL/D to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students:

> I often say when I am talking to people that as a teacher it took me years not only to understand the barrier that not having English was creating for the students in my classrooms but to become highly skilled to the point where I think I was making a difference with the kids I was teaching.[60]

5.93   Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation recommended:

> ... teaching of English as a second language become a compulsory training component for teachers in remote Aboriginal communities in recognition of the fact that English is a second, third or even fourth language for many Aboriginal children, particularly in those communities.[61]

5.94   Mr John Hobson referred to the damage that can occur if a teacher does not have EAL training before teaching in a remote Indigenous community:

> I would advocate that if people are going to go into remote Indigenous schools it should be an absolutely essential requirement for placement that they do have EAL training. Without it they are largely a burden on the community. It is inflicting an ineffective teacher on the students. These kids are so far behind the eight ball now that they really need our best EAL teachers to be working with them, not predominantly first-year-out people who are going to last three months ... .[62]

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59   R Jackson, ACTA, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 18 November 2011, p. 28; Koori Centre, University of Sydney, *Submission 7*, p. 4; K Kasmira, Arlparra School, *Committee Hansard*, Utopia Homelands, 3 April 2012, p. 7.

60   C Gorman, Queensland DET, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2011, p. 8.

61   J Phillips, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 18 November 2011, p. 8.

62   J Hobson, Koori Centre, University of Sydney, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 18 November 2011, pp. 34-5.

5.95   Many teacher training institutions have an EAL/D component, however it is not a compulsory part of training and accreditation in any jurisdiction.

5.96   Every new teacher in the Northern Territory has access to a course on teaching EAL at Charlies Darwin University which is funded by the Northern Territory Government.[63] Kerry Kasmira, the Principal at Arlparra School in the Utopia Homelands, stated that there is strong departmental support for EAL training in the Northern Territory. Three out of nine of her staff were involved in post-graduate studies in EAL/D and one of her senior teachers was completing a masters in teaching EAL/D. [64]

5.97   The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Australian schools speak a variety of Aboriginal English, an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander creole, one or more traditional heritage languages or any combination of these as their home language. Mr Robert Jackson from ACTA referred to incorrect assumptions by schools that Indigenous students home language is English:

> Currently, in many situations where students speak a variety of Aboriginal English and/or an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander creole as their home language, this language or language variety is unnamed or unidentified and thus goes unrecognised by schools and education authorities. It is assumed, incorrectly, that the student's home language is English. Students are often subjected to unsuitable instruction or methodologies and inappropriate referrals for educational remediation as a result.[65]

5.98   The Aboriginal and Islander Independent Community School Inc in Queensland submitted that the majority of their students speak Aboriginal English, therefore it is important that greater attention is given within Indigenous education policy and programs to the role that Aboriginal English plays in the literacy and language skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The school recommended that pre-service teacher education in Australia address Aboriginal English use by urban Indigenous students and the importance this plays in their connection to their traditional languages, their academic achievement and the maintenance of their distinct cultural identity as first nations peoples.[66]

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63   G Barnes, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 7.
64   K Kasmira, Arlparra School, *Committee Hansard*, Utopia Homelands, 3 April 2012, p. 7.
65   R Jackson, ACTA, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 18 November 2011, p. 25.
66   Aboriginal and Islander Independent Community School Inc, *Submission 133*, pp. 1-2.

5.99   Many Aboriginal students in NSW's public schools use some form of
        Aboriginal English as their main language. Many Aboriginal students are
        bi-dialectal, meaning they use both Aboriginal English and Standard
        Australian English at home and at school. The NSW Department of
        Education and Communities' Aboriginal Education and Training
        Directorate provides professional learning and advice to teachers in
        developing bi-dialectal approaches to teaching Standard Australian
        English to Aboriginal students who speak Aboriginal English as their
        home dialect.[67]

5.100   In NSW teachers from 88 schools were offered a two-day course
        supporting application of EAL in delivering English literacy to Aboriginal
        students:

> I am aware that the 88 schools took up the opportunity. What
> happened was: when we were targeting particular teachers, the
> enthusiasm was so great that we had more than the two or three
> teachers in the school who were going to attend, attending. That is
> a very exciting outcome because it demonstrates the recognition of
> Aboriginal English. It also demonstrates the critical importance of
> this: our students are being taught, assessed and reported on in
> standard Australian English; they are speaking Aboriginal
> English, so the understandings of the constructs and code-
> switching those students encounter every day in the engagement
> of education in general is critical. That is one of the most positive
> results of doing the EAL strategy in New South Wales.[68]

5.101   In Western Australia the *Literacy and English as a Second Language in the
        Early Years Project* operates across the Government, Catholic and
        Independent schools sectors. The project's aim is to improve the literacy
        outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students whose home
        language is not English. To achieve its goal, the project is addressing three
        key elements - teacher professional learning, school leadership, and
        advanced professional learning.[69]

5.102   In Queensland the Bridging the Language Gap project, funded by the
        Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace
        Relations (DEEWR) and involving the Queensland Department of
        Education and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission,
        supported personnel from 89 schools to provide professional development

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67   New South Wales Department of Education and Communities, *Submission 59*, p. 19.

68   M Hall, New South Wales Department of Education and Communities, *Committee Hansard*,
      Sydney, 18 November 2011, p. 20.

69   DEEWR, *Submission 131*, p. 19.

to assist with building their capacity to identify, support and monitor EAL/D learners in the process of learning Standard Australian English (SAE).[70]

5.103   The Northern Indigenous Schooling Support Unit (ISSU) in Queensland has a Language Perspectives Team that consists of teachers and linguists. The team conducts research on second language acquisition and vernacular languages, supports schools with building capacity to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners. The ISSU Languages Perspectives Team supports the following projects:

■ Adopt-A-School Initiative - Teachers who are experienced at teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners work with schools and teachers to help build their capacity, and

■ EAL Essentials workshops – four day workshops to provide an initial source of information for teachers who are working with Indigenous EAL students. The workshop provides an opportunity to develop understandings and practical skills for the classroom.[71]

5.104   The Queensland Department of Education and Training is the lead agency working with equivalent departments in other states to develop professional development resources to support with building the capacity of teachers to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners. The two cross jurisdictional projects are:

■ the Teaching English as An Additional Language or Dialect Online Professional Learning Resource project will develop a comprehensive professional development course in-line with the National Professional Standards for Teachers. It will align with professional development and registration requirements for participating jurisdictions and will possibly have links with universities. The resource is scheduled to be available for use by teachers from mid 2013, and

■ the English as an Additional Language or Dialect Online Package will provide teachers new to remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools pragmatic, practical strategies to assist them will their first 10 weeks in the remote context.[72]

5.105   In addition to EAL/D training, cultural training should be considered an essential part of a teacher's training. Young teachers often begin their teaching career in remote Indigenous communities where preparatory

70   Queensland DET, *Submission 109*, p. 9.
71   Queensland DET, *Submission 109*, p. 11.
72   Queensland DET, *Submission 109*, p. 11.

cultural and language training is essential. However, currently such
training is only offered sporadically.

5.106   In Queensland the Remote Area Teacher Education Program has been
developed by James Cook University and has a mandatory component in
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures as part of its teacher pre-
service training.[73] Also in Queensland, the state government is working
with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)
on developing the resources for pre-service teaching around culture and
language.[74]

Committee comment

5.107   In present day Australia there are children from a vast array of cultures
and first languages or dialects. This is the rich tapestry of culture
prevalent in today's society and is not confined to remote areas or to areas
of high Indigenous populations.

5.108   The evidence to the Committee demonstrated that there are high numbers
of Indigenous students going to school in urban, regional and remote
areas with a first language or dialect other than SAE.

5.109   The Committee believes that students who speak dialects or creoles, such
as Aboriginal English, may require EAL/D teaching. In Chapter 4 the
Committee recommended that education departments identify the first
language spoken by the child when commencing early childhood learning.
These assessments would assist with understanding the demand for
EAL/D teaching not sufficiently utilised and funded in schools.

5.110   The Committee agrees with many participants in the inquiry that every
trainee teacher should have EAL/D training so that they have the
requisite skills to aid the child's learning and ensure schooling is a
productive rather than a confusing learning environment.

5.111   In particular, the Committee is of the view all teachers working in schools
with a high percentage of EAL/D students should be required to have
EAL/D training.

5.112   The Committee considers there needs to be a shift in teacher training
institutions to recognise EAL/D as an essential part of teacher training.
The requirement needs to come from the state education departments to

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73   S Armitage, Queensland DET, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2011, p. 5.
74   S Armitage, Queensland DET, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2011, p. 5.

drive teacher training institutions to provide EAL training as a compulsory part of their teaching courses.

5.113   EAL/D training should be a requisite part of pre-service training. In addition, in-service EAL/D training for those teachers already working in schools should be expanded and all teachers be required to undertake this training as part of mandatory professional development.

5.114   An understanding and respect of the culture and language of an Indigenous community is an important part of teacher training. The Committee supports the Queensland Government's focus on cultural training for teachers placed in Indigenous communities or schools with high numbers of Indigenous students.

Recommendation 21 - Compulsory EAL/D training for teaching degrees

5.115   **The Committee recommends the Minister for Education take to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) a proposal to include a compulsory component of English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) training for all teaching degrees.**

Recommendation 22 – In-service EAL/D and cultural awareness training

5.116   **The Committee recommends the Minister for Education take to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) a proposal that all teachers already working in schools in Indigenous communities be required to complete in-service EAL/D and cultural awareness training as part of mandatory professional development.**

6

Interpreting and translating Indigenous languages

6.1   According to Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2011 data, 16.6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island language speakers report that they do not speak English well or at all.[1]

6.2   During this inquiry the Committee was told by people working in many areas of government services that there was significant demand for Indigenous interpreting and translating services, however insufficient supply of appropriately qualified people to carry out this important work.

6.3   Under the Council of Australian Government (COAG) National Indigenous Reform Agreement service delivery principles, the Commonwealth and all States and Territories have agreed that programs and services should be physically and culturally accessible to Indigenous people, including through access to interpreting services. The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) acknowledged that Indigenous people who require assistance communicating in English should have access to an interpreter so they can understand and be understood. [2]

6.4   This chapter explores access and provision of Indigenous interpreting and translating services across Australia, including:

- current Indigenous languages interpreting and translating services in Australia

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1   Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Census of Population and Housing', 2011, <www.agencysearch.australia.gov.au/search/search.cgi?collection=agencies&form=simple& profile=abs&query=census of population and housing 2011> accessed 12 September 2012.

2   Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), *Submission 141*, pp. 3 and 8.

- funding and resourcing Indigenous interpreting services

- the development of the National Framework for the effective supply and use of Indigenous language interpreters and translators (the National Framework is an action under the National Indigenous Languages Policy)

- protocols on engaging Indigenous interpreting services

- the proposal for a National Indigenous Interpreting Service, and

- the accreditation and training of Indigenous language interpreters.

Current Indigenous interpreting and translating across Australia

6.5   State and territory governments have the responsibility for ensuring interpreters are available, when needed, to assist clients with government services. All states and territories have mainstream interpreter services which provide for a vast array of international languages, however the quality and supply of interpreters for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island languages varies significantly across the states and territories.

6.6   There are two established Indigenous interpreting services in Australia: the Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service (NT AIS) provides interpreting across the Northern Territory and the Kimberley Interpreting Services (KIS) provides interpreting in Kimberley and central desert languages.

6.7   The NT AIS is established within the Northern Territory Government Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services, but provides services within an Aboriginal cultural framework. The NT AIS is one of the biggest employers of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory with 422 active interpreters.[3]

6.8   KIS is a community-controlled Aboriginal organisation operating under the auspices of the Mirima Council Aboriginal Corporation and is guided by a Steering Committee of experienced interpreters. KIS has 170 interpreters representing 26 languages.[4]

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3   M McCarthy, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 2.

4   D Newry, KIS, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, pp. 14-15.

6.9   Both NT AIS and KIS, although structured differently, have established a strong 'social license' to operate by providing interpreting services in the 'right way', paying attention to both professional interpreting codes of ethics and Indigenous social protocols.[5] The NT AIS and KIS engage accredited interpreters who are encouraged to identify and act upon conflicts of interest and other impediments to provide effective communication. The NT AIS website stated:

> Professional interpreters are bound by a strict code of ethics covering confidentiality, impartiality, accuracy and reliability, and have completed training and assessment to certify that they have level of linguistic competence.[6]

6.10   The South Australian Government's Interpreting and Translating Centre offers services in Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara languages. In Queensland an interpreter service provides interpreting and translating in a number of Indigenous languages and in Aurukun there are qualified interpreters in the Wik Mungkan language.[7]

6.11   In addition, many language centres offer interpreting and translating services. For example, the Papulu Apparr-Kari Language Centre provides interpreting and translating services in the Barkly Region of the Northern Territory and charges fees for services.[8]

Commonwealth Government funding to Indigenous interpreting and translating

6.12   The Commonwealth Government provides funding for Indigenous interpreting through the Closing the Gap Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement (NT NP) and the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery (RSD NP).

6.13   Through NT NP, FaHCSIA provides funding to the Northern Territory Government for the NT AIS. The Agreement provided $8.085 million dollars over three years to 2011-12 for the professional development, training and accreditation of interpreters and the employment of

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5   FaHCSIA, *Submission 141*, p. 13.

6   NT AIS, Working with Interpreters <www.dlghs.nt.gov.au/ais/working_with_interpreters> accessed 18 July 2012.

7   ATSILS, *The Right to a Fair Trial: A Submission to the Commonwealth Attorney-General Regarding the Expansion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Interpreter Services*, 2012, pp. 17-19.

8   K Hayward, Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation, *Committee Hansard*, Alice Springs, 4 April 2012, p. 29.

community liaison/mentor officers and community-based interpreters. The funding was to build the capacity of the NT AIS.

6.14   The RSD NP (2008-09 to 2013-14) identifies allocation between the Commonwealth, states and the Northern Territory for interpreting and translation, with $38.7 million being identified across the duration of the Agreement, $19.8 million by the Commonwealth and $18.9 million by the States and Northern Territory. FaHCSIA has allocated most of the Commonwealth's RSD interpreter and translation funds to Remote Operations Centres to be administered in an integrated fashion with other engagement activities.

6.15   The Attorney-General's Department (AGD) administers a Memorandum of Understanding between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Government for interpreter services to Indigenous people. Funding supports free access to interpreters for Northern Territory law, justice, health agencies and AGD funded legal assistance service providers. The interpreting services are provided by the NT AIS. [9]

6.16   Interpreting and translating services are not eligible for funding under the Commonwealth Government's Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) program. However, some of the ILS funded language centres do provide interpreter services on their own accord as a means of supporting income. [10]

National framework on Indigenous interpreting and translating

6.17   The National Indigenous Languages Policy provides for the Commonwealth Government to work with the states and the Northern Territory to introduce a national framework for the effective supply and use of Indigenous language interpreters and translators (National Framework). Components of the proposed national framework include:

- development and strengthening of Indigenous interpreting services through establishing mentor/coordinator positions, providing base salary funding for interpreters and administrative support of interpreters;

- training and accrediting Indigenous interpreters – development of nationally consistent curriculum material for training and

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9   FaHCSIA, *Submission 141*, p. 9.

10   Office of the Arts, *Submission 127*, p. 6.

> provision of training leading to accreditation and expertise in particular subject areas;
>
> ■ increasing supply of Indigenous interpreters through development and establishment of a national recruitment and retention strategy, with localised flexibility;
>
> ■ increasing demand for interpreters through increased training for government and non-government employees working in relevant locations; translation of government information products.
>
> ■ Consideration could be given to forming a National Reference Group of Experts to advise on future directions of policy on Indigenous interpreters. Each of the components would involve contributions from the Commonwealth and from each of the jurisdictions.[11]

6.18   The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has agreed under the RSD NP that the Commonwealth should develop a National Framework, working with the states and the Northern Territory. FaHCSIA is the lead agency responsible for developing the National Framework and expected it would be developed over the year 2012.[12]

6.19   FaHCSIA stated that the National Framework would be the key means to improve capacity and engagement across all levels of government, third party service providers, industry, and Indigenous Australians. The Framework is being developed with consideration to the following:

■ increasing the supply of suitably qualified Indigenous language interpreters

■ stimulating the demand for and use of interpreters by Indigenous communities, governments and third party services providers, and

■ creating a sustainable industry for Indigenous language interpreters.[13]

6.20   The Committee notes that the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) submitted that it would welcome an invitation to participate in the development of the National Framework. In its submission, the TSRA recommended the establishment of a pool of Torres Strait Islander language specialists, interpreters and translators to enhance strategies that aim to Close the Gap.[14]

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11   Office for the Arts, 'Indigenous Languages – A National Approach 2009' <www.arts. gov.au/indigenous/languages>, accessed 18 July 2012.

12   FaHCSIA, *Submission 141*, p. 8.

13   FaHCSIA, *Submission 141*, p. 8.

14   Torres Strait Regional Authority, *Submission 146*, pp. 14-15.

Engaging Indigenous interpreting services

6.21   Many Commonwealth Government departments use interpreters and
         translation services to engage Indigenous people in the design and
         delivery of programs and policy. The Department of Human Services
         (DHS) has a policy of providing free interpreting and translation services
         to customers who have limited English. DHS is the largest government
         agency user of the NT AIS and KIS. Outside of the Northern Territory and
         the Kimberley, the department uses its own panel of interpreters and
         bilingual staff to meet demand.[15]

6.22   In the implementation of the RSD NP interpreters and translators are
         being used to ensure community members have a sound understanding of
         the processes. The intention is to enable effective local participation in
         developing Local Implementation Plans.[16]

6.23   Local Indigenous Engagement Officers (IEOs) have been recruited in the
         remote priority locations to help communities understand and engage
         with the implementation of the RSD NP. FaHCSIA stated that IEOs have
         played a critical role in remote locations in providing cross-cultural
         support and advice to communities and government officials.[17] As at June
         2012, FaHCSIA had employed 43 IEOs across Australia. FaHCSIA
         submitted that up to 90 full and part time IEO positions would be created
         over the next two years.[18]

6.24   The Commonwealth Ombudsman reported in its March 2011 report
         *Talking in Language: Indigenous language interpreters and government
         communication* that with the roll out of the NTER and subsequent
         programs under the COAG agreements and other Commonwealth
         initiatives, demand for Indigenous language interpreters had increased.[19]

6.25   However, the Ombudsman found that there was often a lack of awareness
         of the significant barriers that language poses for communication between
         Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians which can lead to gaps in
         service delivery by governments. The Ombudsman reported that there

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15   Department of Human Services, *Submission 8*, p. 7.

16   FaHCSIA, *Submission 141*, p. 10.

17   FaHCSIA, *Submission 141*, p. 11.

18   FaHCSIA, *Submission 141a*, p. 1.

19   Commonwealth Ombudsman, *Submission 22,* Attachment A: Talking in language: Indigenous
      language interpreters and government communication, April 2011, p. 5.

was a shortage of interpreters and a failure to use them when they are available.[20]

6.26   In its submission the Commonwealth Ombudsman stated that ineffective interpreting could undermine Close the Gap targets:

> In our experience, without interpreters and proper regard to the language barriers that Indigenous Australians face, service delivery can be misdirected and damaging and people can be excluded from, and alienated by, the very programs designed to assist them. Further, if Indigenous languages are not preserved and then taken into account in service delivery to Indigenous Australians, many Closing the Gap initiatives will be undermined.[21]

6.27   Other participants in the inquiry believed there needed to be an improvement in the uptake of Indigenous languages interpreting services. The Central Land Council stated that in Central Australia many Aboriginal people do not speak Standard Australian English (SAE), and most Government workers do not speak an Aboriginal language, therefore good communication often necessitates the use of interpreters. The importance of using interpreters, however, was not realised in the public and private sectors and often interpreters were not used.[22]

6.28   The Northern Territory Minister for Indigenous Policy noted that private sector institutions do not always use Indigenous interpreters:

> We are very aware that the major operators like Telstra and Optus use interpreters from non-English-speaking backgrounds, but there are no Indigenous language speakers who are utilised in those services. This is, again, about providing job opportunities. We as a government are very aware that it should not be just in the government space that interpreters are used[23]

6.29   Ms Denise Angelo asserted that government funded services would be more efficient and effective if clients understood the information provided and the processes required and were able to provide their information and be understood. Ms Angelo suggested government service providers should be rewarded for using interpreters.[24]

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20   Commonwealth Ombudsman, *Submission 22*, Attachment A: Talking in language: Indigenous language interpreters and government communication, April 2011, pp. 2-3.
21   Commonwealth Ombudsman, *Submission 22*, p. 1.
22   Central Land Council, *Submission 100*, p. 16.
23   M McCarthy, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 3.
24   D Angelo, *Submission 153*, p. 12.

6.30   Ms Claire Salter referred to the misconception that because individuals
        have a good understanding of English they do not require assistance of a
        professional interpreter:

>   In my experiences working within both health and education
>   fields I have seen a very poor uptake of interpreting services in
>   general. There remains a very Western-centric view of peoples'
>   need for interpreting services and the common misconception is
>   that because people have a sufficient level of conversational
>   English then they do not need an interpreter for health or other
>   higher level language information. It is often the health
>   professionals' decision as to whether or not a person needs an
>   interpreter, not the client or patient. [25]

6.31   The Australian Society for Indigenous Languages (AuSIL) stated that
        many service providers are not aware that there are a number of
        Indigenous languages actively spoken in Australia and that there are
        interpreting and translating services available. AuSIL stated that
        translations are often ineffective:

>   The Federal and State governments are some of the worst
>   offenders in packaging messages in ways that almost ensure they
>   cannot be understood, and cannot be translated easily. Good
>   government-speak is often a bad way to communicate with their
>   intended target audience.[26]

6.32   The Committee notes the Northern Territory's Language Services Policy
        which has been developed to promote and support access to services by
        speakers of languages other than English. While not specifically focussed
        on Indigenous interpreting services, the policy requires all Northern
        Territory departments or agencies to:

■   acknowledge client's entitlements/rights to the services of an
    appropriately qualified interpreter or translator and be aware of the
    situations in the an interpreter should be used

■   commit to the appropriate use of qualified interpreters and translators
    in the delivery of all services for people who speak a language other
    than English

■   be aware as to when interpreters must be used, taking into account the
    agency's obligations to their clients, the legislative requirements and

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25   C Salter, *Submission 100*, p. 5.

26   AuSIL, *Submission 60*, p. 6.

> risks that could impact clients' health, safety and/or human rights if an interpreter is not utilised, and

- ◾ acknowledge that the use of language services by staff is a justifiable and necessary expense - each agency has an obligation to plan and budget for interpreting services to ensure that these services will be available when the need arises. Staff and divisions will incorporate language services strategies into their budget, their human resource programs, and organisational planning.[27]

6.33   FaHCSIA is drafting a Commonwealth Government policy protocol on the use of Indigenous interpreters which will identify circumstances when departmental staff should use interpreters. The intention is that this protocol will be used by all Commonwealth agencies.[28]

Committee comment

6.34   The Committee believes the development of a National Framework for Indigenous language interpreting and translating is an important step to building a national Indigenous interpreting service. The Committee experienced first-hand difficulties with the supply and service of Indigenous interpreters during the inquiry. These are discussed later in this chapter.

6.35   Commonwealth funding support has focussed on the Northern Territory and the 29 priority locations under the RSD NP. It is clear that Indigenous language interpreting and translating services are inadequate, particularly in remote communities. This is inconsistent with the aims and approaches of the National Indigenous Languages Policy and there is an urgent need for this deficiency to be remedied.

6.36   The Committee considers that the National Framework for the supply and use of Indigenous languages interpreters and translators is a priority. The Committee recognises that in order for it to function properly, issues of training, accreditation and business models must be investigated to ensure a reliable supply of professional interpreters and translators. The Committee discusses these issues in the following sections and in the Committee comments that follow it addresses the implementation issues of establishing a National Framework.

6.37   The Commonwealth Ombudsman and other participants in the inquiry referred to communication barriers occurring between government

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27   Northern Territory Government, *Submission 138*, pp. 7-8.
28   FaHCSIA, *Submission 141*, p. 10.

agencies and Indigenous people which may be undermining Closing the Gap targets.

6.38   The Committee supports efforts by FaHCSIA to issue a protocol on the use of Indigenous interpreters to be used by all Commonwealth Government agencies.

6.39   The Committee believes all Commonwealth Government agencies would benefit from a protocol on the use of Indigenous interpreting services. A protocol would assist government agencies to raise awareness of the benefits of using interpreters and how to go about working with interpreters to deliver programs and services. The Committee further believes non-government organisations which regularly conduct their business in Indigenous communities would benefit from the protocol as a guide.

Recommendation 23 - Protocol on the use of Indigenous interpreting services

6.40   **The Committee recommends that the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs expedite the release of a protocol on the use of Indigenous interpreting services for all Commonwealth Government agencies.**

    The Committee further recommends that the Commonwealth Government raise at Council of Australian Governments (COAG) the need for all states and territories to have similar protocols and ensure the use of competent interpreters when required.

6.41   The Committee urges non-government organisations and businesses to utilise the protocol to guide their interactions and use of interpreting services when communicating with Indigenous peoples.

A national Indigenous interpreter service

6.42   As referred to in preceding paragraphs, the NT AIS has received a significant injection of Commonwealth Government funding to improve the training and support for an Indigenous interpreting service. The state governments are largely responsible for providing interpreting services in other regions of the country.

6.43   Demand for interpreting services in the Northern Territory remains high. The NT AIS reports that requests for interpreters by governments have increased from 3 947 tasks in 2007-08 to 6 461 tasks in 2010-11.[29] The Central Land Council submitted that the AIS is not always able to meet demand for its services and the quality of services it can provide varies according to interpreters' skill levels.[30]

6.44   Although limited interpreting services are available, demand is very high in other areas outside of the Northern Territory. For example, in South Australia there is very high demand for interpreters, particularly in Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara languages, with limited numbers of interpreters available.[31] Representatives from TAFE SA advocated the establishment of a South Australian Indigenous interpreting service to be managed by Aboriginal people who understand the culture and the people who could most appropriately do the work.[32] The Sisters of St Joseph Reconciliation Circle submitted:

> In SA there have been up till the last very few years just 2 (TWO) extremely overworked Pitjantjatjara/ Yankunyjatjara interpreters. ... It has been good to hear that in this time, suitable people in SA have been actively sought for training as Interpreters – with the necessary funding, recruiting and enabling required. However just last year one of our members who has lived in SA regions where most Aboriginal people have English as a second language, was approached informally by a person responsible in one of the main Adelaide hospitals, saying the situation was still desperate at times and seemingly not aware of the networks.[33]

6.45   The Committee heard that interpreting services are required across Australia, including where creoles or dialects are spoken. Mrs Bridget Priman from the Eastern States Indigenous Languages Group (ESILG) described a situation where she would have benefitted from interpreting of her first language, Aboriginal English. Although able to understand and be understood in her use of English words, she described how in a medical situation an understanding of the langue differences was missing and this misunderstanding added to the stress of the situation:

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29   FaHCSIA, *Submission 141*, p. 9.

30   Central Land Council, *Submission 100*, p. 16.

31   K Lester, University of Adelaide, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 2 April 2012, p. 32.

32   I Scales and B McDonald, TAFE South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 2 April 2012, p. 30.

33   Sisters of St Joseph SA Reconciliation Circle, *Submission 41*, pp. 4-5.

> A good example is that you have to go from one to 10 on your pain. I always cry about this one. 'No, it's no good,' is what I will say. I will say, 'No, that's not good,' but they want you to tell them from one to 10 about the pain. I can say, 'It's pretty bad,' or, 'it's no good,' or, 'it's not too bad.' That is how we talk. [34]

6.46   The justice and health sectors are considered to be areas where effective interpreting and translating is essential and in urgent need of more training and resources. Special concepts and vocabulary in these specialised fields require additional training or orientation. The Australian Society for Indigenous Languages commented on the need for 'additional training to raise the bar for existing translation and interpreting services', particularly for people in the justice and health sectors. [35]

6.47   KIS and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) referred to the costs associated with not using interpreters early in contact between service providers and clients, for example:

■ in the justice sector, there are high hidden costs associated with adjourning and reconvening court sittings to enable lawyers to attempt to clarify and obtain clear instructions from their clients. The absence of qualified interpreters can increase the risk of litigation arising from miscarriages of justice[36], and

■ in the health sector, if interpreters were used early, clinicians could exchange accurate information earlier and provide more effective and efficient diagnosis, therapy and treatment. [37]

6.48   During the Committee's 2009 inquiry into Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system, the Committee found that qualified Indigenous language interpreters available to work in the criminal justice system were scarce. The Committee was concerned that many Indigenous people with limited English skills came before the justice system and due to language barriers did not necessarily fully comprehend the situation or their rights. This has potentially serious consequences. [38]

6.49   During this inquiry the Committee again received evidence around the poor Indigenous interpreting support in the justice system. The North

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34   B Priman, ESILG, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2012, p. 15.

35   Australian Society for Indigenous Languages, *Submission 60*, pp. 5-6.

36   ATSILS, *The Right to a Fair Trial: A Submission to the Commonwealth Attorney-General Regarding the Expansion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Interpreter Services*, 2012, p. 14.

37   KIS, *Discussion Paper: Indigenous Language Interpreting Services,* 2004, p. 6.

38   House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Doing Time – Time for Doing: Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system*, 2011, p. 206.

Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) asserted that Aboriginal people do not fully understand either the court process or the outcomes of those processes and interpreters are either unavailable or underutilised. NAAJA stated that there is a 'current paucity of qualified Aboriginal interpreters' which can be attributed largely to insufficient funding to the NT AIS and 'related problems of inadequate resources available for training, recruitment and retention of staff'.[39] NAAJA referred to the difficulties in arranging interpreters to be available for court proceedings within a short time and the dilemmas this presents with clients remaining in custody.[40]

6.50   NAAJA supported increased funding to the NT AIS and better use of appropriately qualified Aboriginal interpreters by the courts. NAAJA contended that there would be many benefits to the criminal justice system, 'most importantly, Aboriginal people will have the opportunity to fully understand and participate in their court case'. There would also be 'broad positive social impacts, including potentially reducing rates of Aboriginal incarceration, and contact with the criminal justice system'.[41]

6.51   Other submissions referred to the need for greater engagement of appropriately skilled interpreters in the health sector, both in hospitals and in clinics. For example, Dr Jane Thorn from Royal Darwin Hospital stated:

> Interpreting services (which are currently used very inefficiently in the public health system) are vital to beginning to establish some common understanding between a "white" medical system and its Indigenous patients, but words and word use alone do not equate to understanding, especially where those providing the information (i.e. health care professionals and interpreters) may not fully comprehend the information themselves or the implications of that information.[42]

6.52   Low levels of communication between health professionals and patients can lead to inadequate diagnosis and treatment. Dr Thorn, who provides health care to women in the Northern Territory, discussed birthing and gynaecological services provided by the hospitals and its clinical services. Dr Thorn spoke of the difficulties in engaging with Indigenous women to ensure they were providing effective and appropriate services:

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39   NAAJA, *Submission 135*, p. 6.
40   P Collins, NAAJA, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 34.
41   NAAJA, *Submission 135*, p. 6.
42   J Thorn, *Submission 50*, p. 2.

> In terms of my dealing with my Indigenous patients, we are coming at the world from two very different places. It is not just a difficulty in communication; we can talk in words. I can talk about what I am going to do in relation to, say, something surgical. I can get out pictures. I can talk sometimes in relation to language to be able to say, 'This is what I'm going to do,' if I am talking about a surgical procedure. They can understand that on one level, but in terms of me actually understanding the implications of what I am talking about or what I am suggesting in my proposed treatment for those women, we are not connecting. I think the only way that we really can connect is where we can come to some way of not just communicating in words but communicating in a framework where we can negotiate between us what we really want to do. That is the only way we are going to get really good health outcomes.[43]

6.53   The National Rural Health Alliance asserted that although Aboriginal Health Workers do interpret language, they are not specifically trained for this. Therefore, trained interpreters can offer great assistance to health providers in achieving meaningful health outcomes.[44]

6.54   In the justice and health areas, interpreters require extensive training on the use and understanding of specialist English terminology and finding equivalents in their Indigenous language. Jobs in these sectors are complex and continuous professional development is required beyond accreditation at the paraprofessional level.

6.55   KIS suggested one solution would be to develop partnerships that allow an agency, hospital, or lawyer to work regularly with a group of interpreters to develop their language skills, whilst the non-Aboriginal person has access to cultural advice.[45] The Committee heard that the NT AIS are training people in law terms and vocabulary through an educator seconded from NAAJA.[46]

6.56   A significant number of participants in the inquiry supported a national interpreting and translating service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.[47] A joint submission from Aboriginal and Torres Strait

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43   J Thorn, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 67.

44   National Rural Health Alliance, *Submission 148*, p. 2.

45   KIS, *Discussion Paper: Indigenous Language Interpreting Services,* June 2004, p. 24.

46   M McLellan, AuSIL, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 31; P Collins, NAAJA, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 34.

47   Curriculum Council of Western Australia, *Submission 129*, p. 6; A Hawkes, *Submission 120*, p. 5; C Rosas, NT AIS, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 8.

Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) to the Attorney-General on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interpreter services stated:

> It is unacceptable that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander defendants are in this predicament yet other defendants in need of a foreign language interpreter have ready access to high quality interpreters through the Commonwealth funded Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS).[48]

6.57   The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples supported the establishment of a National Indigenous Interpreting Service as important for the delivery of basic human services, particularly necessary in the area of courts and justice, where the lack of provision of these services may affect the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to obtain a fair trial, and may lead to increased rates of incarceration.[49]

6.58   In 2005, the National Indigenous Languages Survey (NILS) report recommended increasing translating and interpreting services in regional centres with large numbers of Indigenous people who do not speak English well. The NILS report also observed that interpreting services for Indigenous people had been relatively neglected compared with migrant language groups. The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) National is under the auspices of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and provides a service to migrant language groups.[50]

Challenges to establishing a national Indigenous interpreting service

6.59   One of the main challenges to establishing a national Indigenous interpreting service is there is often a limited pool of Indigenous language speakers who can effectively provide an interpreting or translating service. Mr John Beever from the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) referred to the lack of infrastructure to support interpreting in Indigenous languages in comparison to international languages:

> Again, we can give you the perspective from the national accreditation authority but we think the critical thing that we have observed in the years and decades of working with international

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48   ATSILS, *The Right to a Fair Trial: A Submission to the Commonwealth Attorney-General Regarding the Expansion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Interpreter Services*, March 2012, p. 15.

49   National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, *Submission 139*, p. 7.

50   Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (AIATSIS) and the Federation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and Culture (FATSILC), *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005*, pp. 90 and 119.

languages is that international languages have the benefit of what
I call the enabling infrastructure—large numbers of speakers,
larger numbers of institutions that provide training in that
language. Where there is training in those sorts of languages, they
are quite often paralleled with translating and interpreting
training which feeds off those languages.[51]

6.60   The Commonwealth Ombudsman noted there are significant challenges in
recruiting and retaining interpreters, including:

- poor literacy and numeracy amongst those individuals who
  have the requisite Indigenous language skills;
- the ability to find people who are able to meet the demands of
  being an interpreter when there can be competing or conflicting
  cultural obligations;
- many people who would be suitable interpreters have other
  employment;
- the irregular nature of interpreting work can make it an
  unattractive employment option;
- the number of Indigenous languages spoken across Australia,
  coupled with a decreasing number of fluent speakers in some
  languages; and
- lack of accreditation at professional level for Indigenous
  language interpreters by the National Accreditation Authority
  for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI).[52]

6.61   The relatively small pool of Indigenous language interpreters can result in
burn out from overuse, particularly for those who specialise in a particular
field of interpreting, for example health and justice.[53]

6.62   The Department of Human Services identified challenges in delivering a
national Indigenous interpreter service due to the shortage of trained and
accredited professional Indigenous language interpreters across Australia,
and the skill levels required to deal with the full range of complexities
inherent in the Indigenous languages interpreting profession. [54]

6.63   Another issue with establishing a pool of Indigenous language
interpreters is the level of English level proficiency required by
interpreters. It is well recognised that a good Indigenous interpreter

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51   J Beever, NAATI, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 March 2012, p. 13.

52   Commonwealth Ombudsman, *Submission 22*, Attachment A: Talking in language: Indigenous
language interpreters and government communication, 2011, p. 4.

53   J Giacon, *Submission 1*, p. 1; A Rigney, Kaurna Warra Pintyandi, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide,
2 April 2012, p. 2.

54   Department of Human Services, *Submission 8*, pp. 7-8.

requires a highly demanding and specific skills set. An effective interpreter must understand the English language of the court, the medical centre or the government agency and know how to pass that on to the community in an Indigenous language. Mr John Hobson stated:

> Good abilities in their own language and good abilities in English are certainly necessary preconditions for a good translator and interpreter, but they are a highly specific skills set.[55]

6.64   The Central Land Council asserted that the variable nature of employment of Indigenous interpreters does not allow for adequate professional development or opportunities for interpreters to work together on complex language concepts.[56]

6.65   Ms Dee Lightfoot, Coordinator of KIS referred to the importance of interpreters having full-time employment and wages and that one of KIS's interpreters was seeking other means of employment in the mines.[57] Ms Annette Kogolo, Co-Chair of KIS explained that the casual nature of interpreting work means interpreters seek full-time work in other areas:

> With employment and wages for interpreters, the existing training working scheme is not working for interpreters because of the casual nature of jobs in our region. Casual work means interpreting is always a secondary employment option. As an interpreter, I can do interpreting only casually if I have another job, and sometimes that makes it very difficult with my position in the other organisation where I am working. We need full-time wages to offer real employment, like in the Northern Territory. It is very empowering for our people to be employed on their own merits with their language skills and to work as interpreters or translators and also as mentors and community liaisons for interpreting.[58]

6.66   The Northern Territory government is employing part time and full time interpreter positions, thereby offering a career path to otherwise casual interpreters.[59]

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55   J Hobson, Koori Centre, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 18 November 2011, p. 33.
56   Central Land Council, *Submission 101*, p. 17.
57   D Lightfoot, KIS, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 17.
58   A Kogolo, KIS, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 16.
59   Northern Territory Government, *Submission 138*, p. 7.

The role of language centres in interpreting services

6.67   Both FaHCSIA and the Office for the Arts suggested that consideration
        needs to be given to whether there are opportunities to link the
        development of the Indigenous interpreting industry with other activities
        to support the maintenance of Indigenous languages.[60]

6.68   The Northern Territory Government referred to the contribution
        interpreters make to the maintenance of Indigenous languages:

> Mentoring of younger interpreters by older generations also
> facilitates intergenerational knowledge transfer and the
> maintenance of more traditional forms of language.[61]

6.69   At an AIATSIS conference in 2011, KIS advised that one-on-one learning
        relationships between a 'master' (elder, speaker) and an 'apprentice'
        (language learner) can deepen the Indigenous language skills of young
        Interpreters.[62]

6.70   The Department of Human Services suggested that language centres could
        provide the basis for a viable structure with growth potential for an
        interpreter capability. A focus on developing bilingual speakers (and
        eventually interpreters) would help actively maintain and promote the
        languages while enhancing interpreter capability and capacity:

> A possible approach could be to combine the Language Centres
> under one overarching network, with proper training and
> technology, to link a series of Centres to form the basis of a
> national Indigenous interpreting service. DHS with the addition of
> the health, education and the justice systems creates an enormous
> potential to provide work and create resources for Indigenous
> interpreters and bilingual speakers.[63]

6.71   Other submissions supported lining Indigenous language centres and a
        national Indigenous interpreting service as a combined effort to train
        interpreters, share resources, and maintain and revive Indigenous
        languages.

6.72   The Central Land Council supported the establishment of a Central
        Australia Languages Centre which could 'train and employ Aboriginal
        language teachers, translators, language researchers and promote the use

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60   Office of the Arts, *Submission 127*, p. 6, FaHCSIA, *Submission 141*, p. 15.
61   Northern Territory Government, *Submission 138*, p. 7.
62   See FaHCSIA, *Submission 141*, p. 14.
63   Department of Human Services, *Submission 8*, p. 9.

of Aboriginal interpreters and knowledge of Aboriginal languages across the Central Australian region'. [64]

6.73   The Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre in Western Australia stated that they have a high number of requests for interpreting and translating services but are unable to provide such a service without core funding.[65]

6.74   Representatives from the Why Warriors Pty Ltd and the AHED Project supported better training of interpreters through well resourced language centres:

> Our experience is that interpreters are not being trained in Yolngu language to a level where they can interpret complex concepts. As a result they are interpreting complex concepts using very basic training, without reference tools such as dictionaries or professional development courses to able to achieve this level of understanding of Yolngu Matha. Language centres need to be funded which are able to pay people to explore language at a deeper level and use resources to reach a level of language for professional use. The creation of dictionaries and e-learning self-training tools for Indigenous people with English as a Second Language must also be supported to enable them to access these important language tools themselves.[66]

Accreditation and training

6.75   As identified above Indigenous interpreting is in demand across a range of complex areas, such as health, justice and government policy. Many English words and western concepts have no immediate equivalents in Indigenous languages so interpreters are required to work out ways to communicate these concepts.

6.76   Many participants in the inquiry supported ongoing training and accreditation opportunities at paraprofessional level and professional level.[67] Mr Richard Trudgen believed interpreting services are 'not good enough', particularly in the medical and legal areas:

64   Central Land Council, *Submission 100*, p. 17.
65   Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre, *Submission 78*, p. 3.
66   Why Warriors Pty Ltd and the AHED Project, *Submission 37*, p. 10.
67   D Angelo, *Submission 153*, p. 12.

> What I find is the people who are doing that training now speak none, or almost none, of the language and definitely do not—say, if somebody is helping people understand the legal stuff— understand the legal language of the Aboriginal people. Therefore the type of training is, 'The judge sits there, the witnesses are here, this is there,' but when it gets down to actually dealing with their rights and responsibilities and roles in the court system and the legal language, you could just go through three sentences that are spoken in any court and there will be up to 10 words in them that the interpreter will probably have no idea of what they mean. We are flat-out breaking the UN regulation that says that people should be able to understand the charges they are charged with and the language of court in their first language. We are breaking it every day in Australia; as bad as any other country or regime in the world past or present, unfortunately, but we do not know about it. We just do not even know about it.[68]

6.77   As part of the NT NP, the Commonwealth Government has provided funding to the Northern Territory Government so the NT AIS can develop and deliver training programs and training materials for Indigenous interpreters and increase the number of accredited interpreters employed by the service. The focus was on increasing the number of interpreters accredited at paraprofessional level, and developing models of training delivery that are matched to the needs of learners. In 2010-11, this work resulted in 17 new accreditations at NAATI paraprofessional level. There are currently 66 accredited interpreters working with the NT AIS.[69]

6.78   Across Australia, the NAATI advised that it has awarded 262 accreditations in interpreting in Indigenous languages, with accreditations being provided in relation to the following Indigenous languages:

> Alyawarra, Anindilyakwa, Anmatyerr (alt name Anmatyerre), Burarra, Djambarrpuyngu, Djapu, Dyirbal, Eastern Aranda (Arrernte), Eastern Arrernte, Gajerrong, Garawa, Gumatj, Gunwinkgu, Gupapuyngu, Hiri-Motu, Iwaidja, Jaru, Kala Lagaw Ya, Kariyarra, Kaytej, Kaytetye, Kija, Kriol, Kukatja, Kunwinjku, Liyagalawumirr, Luritja, Manjiljarra, Martu Wangka, Meriam, Miriam-Mir, Miriuwung, Modern Tiwi, Motu, Murrinh-Patha, Ngaanyatjarra, Nunggubuyu, Nyangumarta, Pitjantjatjara, Tiwi, Torres Strait Island Creole, Walmajarri, Wangkatha, Warlpiri,

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68   R Trudgen, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 21.

69   FaHCSIA, *Submission 141*, p. 12.

> Warumungu, Western Aranda (Arrernte), Western Arrernte, Wik-Mungkan, Yankunytjatjara, Yanyuwa, Yindjibarndi[70]

6.79   Almost all NAATI accreditations are at the paraprofessional level. As referred to later, three speakers were accredited at NAATI professional level for Djambarrpuyngu, a Yolŋu Matha language in 2009.[71]

6.80   NAATI stated that paraprofessional interpreters assist non-English speaking people in general conversations or non-specialist situations. Professional level interpreters are recommended for legal and health assignments where the consequences of inadequate interpreting can be significant for the non-English speaker.[72]

6.81   Mr Robert Foote, Manager Accreditation, NAATI referred to the difference between professional and paraprofessional interpreter accreditation:

> Paraprofessional and professional interpreters are just in the range of different credentials that NAATI awards in both translating and interpreting. The difference between paraprofessional and professional interpreter accreditation is probably what you imagine it to be. It is really around the complexity of language in terms of the individual's ability to understand, their language skills and their transfer skills. So someone who simply speaks two languages will not always be a good interpreter. There are a range of skills that enable you to transfer meaning accurately and efficiently between the two languages, which are not related to language.[73]

6.82   NAATI explained that there is a difference between the standard at which a person performs to receive the qualification and the standard at which a person is recommended for NAATI accreditation. NAATI tests are set at a high standard deliberately as a quality assurance measure. [74]

6.83   NAATI is the national standards and accreditation authority for translators and interpreters in Australia. It is the only agency that issues accreditation or credentials for practitioners who wish to work in these roles in Australia. It is a not-for-profit company owned and is jointly funded by the Australian and State and Territory governments, as well as earning revenue from fees for product and services, such as the fees charged to candidates who sit accreditation fees.

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70   NAATI, *Submission 140*, p. 2.
71   FaHCSIA, *Submission 141*, pp. 12-13.
72   NAATI, *Submission 140*, p. 2.
73   R Foote, NAATI, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 March 2012, p. 10.
74   J Beever and R Foote, NAATI, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 March 2012, p. 12.

6.84   Under its Constitution NAATI's Mission is to:

> …set and maintain high national standards in translating and
> interpreting to enable the existence of a pool of accredited
> translators and interpreters responsive to the changing needs and
> demography of the Australian culturally and linguistically diverse
> society. [75]

6.85   NAATI fulfils this mission by setting and maintaining standards in a
         national quality-assurance system of credentialing practitioners who meet
         these standards. NAATI credentialing provides quality-assurance to
         clients of translators and interpreters and credibility to agencies that
         employ practitioners who are credentialed appropriately.

6.86   NAATI government funding has been provided through the departments
         responsible for migrant and refugee settlement. Funding for Indigenous
         services is provided by separate departments. NAATI stated that because
         'its funding now generally comes from appropriations for migrant and
         refugee settlement purposes it cannot properly be used for other
         purposes'.[76]

6.87   NAATI submitted that specific funding for improving services for
         Indigenous interpreters would be beneficial:

> If NAATI had specific funding for improving services for
> Indigenous interpreters both AIS and NAATI would be able to
> deliver better their core business. NAATI would be able to expand
> the range of languages and levels of accreditation available to AIS
> and could relieve AIS of much of its present involvement in
> testing. NAATI would also be able to progressively expand the
> range of languages tested beyond the NT. AIS would be able to
> deliver more services in the NT and to extend the support it
> provides to other interpreting services which wish to learn from its
> success.[77]

6.88   Despite not having specific funding for testing Indigenous languages,
         NAATI does work with relevant organisations which seek assistance with
         accreditation in Indigenous languages. NAATI's submission referred to
         the three interpreting projects it has been involved in:

         ■ assisted the NT AIS to train people with the required English and
           Indigenous language skills. The project involved Charles Darwin

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75   NAATI, *Submission 140a*, p. 1.

76   NAATI, *Submission 140a*, p. 2.

77   NAATI, *Submission 140a*, p. 3.

University in preparing course material, developing examiners course and developing training modules in note-taking, reading and listening skills in AIS's language of greatest need, Djambarrpuyngu. Three out of nine people who completed testing passed at NAATI Professional level

- assisted the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney General to offer interpreter training and testing in Aurukun with the goal of using interpreters in the criminal justice system. Three out of the original six candidates sat the NAATI paraprofessional interpreters test in Wik Mungkan and all passed, and

- Tafe SA started delivering a Diploma of Interpreting course in 2008 designed for Anangu students living in remote communities on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands in north-west South Australia. In 2010 the course began delivering the course online and contact hours for students increased. Twelve interpreters graduated from the course with more expected by March 2012. After completion of the course students who meet the necessary requirements are eligible to receive NAATI accreditation at paraprofessional level. [78]

6.89   NAATI treats Indigenous languages the same as international languages and has the same accreditation standards. However the pathways to accreditation differ with most credentials in Indigenous languages awarded through testing rather than through tertiary courses.[79] Most tests are conducted by NAATI, however in recent years tests have been run by other organisations, such as NT AIS, with the assistance of NAATI. The range of languages which can be accredited has been limited to those the NT AIS can fund. The NT AIS and NAATI were examining what initiatives might be possible to increase Indigenous languages accreditation significantly.[80]

6.90   There is only one NAATI approved course for Indigenous language speakers. Graduates from the TAFE South Australia Diploma of Interpreting who reach the required standard can be recommended to NAATI for accreditation without sitting a test. The Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) in the Northern Territory was approved by NAATI, but that approval lapsed in 2008. The WA Central Institute of TAFE ran a diploma course in Indigenous interpreting but that course is no longer offered.[81]

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78   NAATI, *Submission 140*, pp. 3-5.
79   NAATI, *Submission 140a*, p. 2.
80   NAATI, *Submission 140a*, p. 3.
81   NAATI, *Submission 140a*, pp. 2-3.

6.91   The Northern Territory Government advised that an MOU was to be
        signed between the BIITE and the Northern Territory Government to
        formalise the collaboration and delivery of a Diploma of Interpreting. The
        agreement would enable BIITE to recognise NT AIS delivered training
        activities, including on-the-job training, as credit towards a Diploma of
        Interpreting qualification.[82] Ms Claire Kilgariff from BIITE referred to the
        close working relationship with the NT AIS:

> There is indeed lots of variability in people who are interpreting.
> However, about a year or so ago we decided to form a very close
> partnership with the Aboriginal Interpreter Service. Instead of
> sending the client group to them when they were qualified, we now
> deliver in an embedded way, where our lecturers work right
> alongside the Aboriginal Interpreter Service. So all of the programs—
> for example, there is an induction program for new interpreters—are
> mapped to the qualifications, so our people work side by side with
> the Aboriginal Interpreter Service's trainers. That is one way in which
> we ensure the quality of our interpreters.[83]

6.92   Representatives from KIS confirmed that a Diploma of Interpreting was
        not being offered in the Western Australia. However, there was an
        'urgent need to expand capacity' in the region and the state. The
        Committee notes that at the time of the public hearing in Broome KIS had
        received an indication from the local TAFE that they had 'received funds
        to put the diploma of interpreting on scope' through the on-line course
        offered by TAFE South Australia.[84]

6.93   TAFE South Australia lecturers are delivering interpreting training in the
        Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands and other parts of South
        Australia via remote access. The program uses a flexible training model to
        match the unique requirements of the location and needs of students.

Committee comment

6.94   Interpreting Indigenous languages is a difficult job. An effective and
        competent interpreter considers and respects culturally appropriate forms
        of language, must have a good depth of knowledge of English and
        Indigenous language, and have an understanding of the concept which is
        being discussed. An interpreter must adhere to ethical standards and be
        impartial when interpreting from one language to another.

82   M McCarthy, Northern Territory Government, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 2.
83   C Kilgariff, BIITE, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 62.
84   D Lightfoot, KIS, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 16.

6.95   In developing Indigenous interpreting services, considerations need to be made about the difficulties in attracting and retaining people in the Indigenous interpreting profession. These difficulties are due to the variability of work, the modest pay, and logistical issues such as large distances and limited transport options in remote areas. The Committee acknowledges that the NT AIS is moving towards offering part time and full time positions to start to address these issues.

6.96   The Committee recognises the challenges involved in engaging interpreters in remote areas and considers that a mix of service delivery options, such as via phone, face-to-face, video-conferencing and Skype, could be viable options in establishing an interpreter service.

6.97   During this inquiry the Committee itself learnt first-hand the challenges associated engaging appropriate and effective Indigenous interpreting services. Issues with booking systems, building in sufficient preparation time and accessing appropriate qualified people to undertake the work were some of the challenges which the Committee worked through.

6.98   The Committee acknowledges that the NT AIS and KIS have greatly improved Indigenous interpreting services in the regions they serve. However, there remains a large gap between the need for Indigenous interpreting and use and accessibility of Indigenous interpreting services across the country. Participants in the inquiry demonstrated that interpreting is required across a variety of Indigenous languages, including traditional languages, creoles and dialects.

6.99   There are challenges around establishing a well trained and accredited Indigenous interpreting workforce. The Committee found there is an urgent need for accredited interpreting service in justice and health services.

6.100   With Aboriginal people representing 80 percent of the adult prison population and 97 percent of the juvenile prison population in the Northern Territory, [85] the low numbers of professional interpreters available is of serious concern to the Committee. The Committee considers it a national disgrace that an Indigenous person may face court proceedings or a serious health issue without effective interpreting support.

6.101   The Committee notes that state and territory governments are responsible for key elements of the justice system including police, courts, corrective services and juvenile justice, as well as many other areas of service

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85   D Fox, NAAJA, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 2 May 2012, p. 33.

delivery including parts of the health system. State and territory governments have responsibility for ensuring interpreting services are available to clients of their services.

6.102   However, the Committee believes that access to an effective interpreter service is a fundamental right of all Australians and cannot be compromised or delayed. The Commonwealth Government must work with states and territories to develop a coordinated national Indigenous interpreting service and emergency measures must be put in place to remedy the current disgraceful situation. There is a variation across jurisdictions in both the demand and the accessibility of Indigenous interpreter services. In establishing a national Indigenous interpreting service these variations need to be considered.

6.103   The Committee considers that the National Framework must take into account the communicative requirements of Indigenous people and the need for Indigenous language interpreters across Australia. The Committee believes that there is urgent need for interpreting services to be developed in remote areas where Standard Australian English (SAE) is a second, third or fourth language for many Indigenous Australians.

6.104   The Committee was interested that the TSRA had not been involved in developing the National Framework and encourages FaHCSIA to ensure the TSRA is consulted in the development of the National Framework.

6.105   In 1992 the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs recommended the establishment 'of a national interpreter service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages to ensure that people have reliable access to trained interpreters and translators'. Twenty years later, this Committee is appalled that it is faced with making the same recommendations to government and trusts it will not be met with the inaction that has characterised successive governments. The 1992 Committee called for the national service to utilise existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait language resources where possible.[86]

6.106   During the inquiry into Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system, the Committee found that in many cases qualified interpreters were not available to Indigenous youth who came into contact with the criminal justice system. Many young Indigenous people were disadvantaged by the lack of easily accessible and skilled interpreters. The Committee concluded that an effective national Indigenous interpreter service would ensure Indigenous people have sufficient access to justice. The Committee

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86   House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Language and Culture: A Matter of Survival*, 1992, p. 62.

recommended in the 2011 *Doing Time – Time for Doing* report that 'the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, in partnership with state and territory governments, establish and fund a national Indigenous interpreter that includes a dedicated criminal justice resource and is suitably resourced to service remote areas'. The Committee recommended initial services be introduced in targeted areas by 2012 and full services implemented nationwide by 2015.[87]

6.107   The Commonwealth Government responded that the states and territories are responsible for key elements of the justice and health systems and therefore responsible for ensuring interpreters are available for their clients. The Commonwealth Government further responded that it was continuing the development of the National Framework for the effective supply and use of Indigenous language interpreters.[88]

6.108   In view of the evidence received during the present inquiry, it is clear that the need for a national Indigenous interpreter service cuts across all government jurisdictions. The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government, in partnership with the states and territories, establish a national Indigenous interpreter service that is suitably resourced to service urban, regional and remote Australia. The Committee recommends immediate 'emergency' measures be introduced to provide Indigenous interpreting services across justice and health sectors, while a more long-term approach is developed. There must be competent andgender and culturally appropriate interpreters available.

6.109   The Committee reiterates its recommendations from its 1992 and 2011 reports that a national Indigenous interpreting service is established to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are allowed the same access to interpreting services as other Australians.

Recommendation 24 - National Indigenous Interpreter Service

6.110   **The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government, in partnership with the states and territories, establish a national Indigenous interpreter service that is suitably resourced to service urban, regional and remote Australia.**

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87   House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Doing Time – Time for Doing: Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system*, June 2011, p. 210.

88   Australian Government, *Government response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Report: Doing Time - Time for Doing: Indigenous Youth in the Criminal Justice System*, November 2011, p. 30.

Recommendation 25 –Interpreting in health and justice sectors

6.111   **The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government put in place immediate measures to ensure access to Indigenous interpreting services in the health and justice sectors, while a competent and comprehensive interpreting service is being developed.**

6.112   In establishing a national network of qualified Indigenous language interpreters, the Committee supports the notion that Indigenous language centres be involved with training and sharing resources. Often Indigenous language speakers are associated with language centres and assist to produce resources for their communities.

6.113   Linking languages centres with interpreting training could assist to build a professional Indigenous interpreter service. The Committee believes if language centres are appropriately resourced they could provide much assistance to training and providing interpreting services.

6.114   The Committee considers that language centres could have the combined effect of supporting language maintenance and revival and building a Indigenous language interpreting service.

6.115   The Committee commends the great work in recent years by the NT AIS to train Indigenous interpreters and significantly increase the number of paraprofessional interpreters working in the Northern Territory. The training, coordinated with NAATI, has also seen three people reach professional level accreditation.

6.116   The NT AIS and the KIS are the only two established Indigenous interpreting services in Australia. These two services offer trained and accredited interpreters who are bound by ethical standards. Outside of the Northern Territory and the Kimberley there is limited guidance on accessing Indigenous interpreting services.

6.117   The Commonwealth Government's focus and funding towards Indigenous interpreter training has been in the Northern Territory. There is significant demand for qualified interpreters in the states. The KIS referred to the urgent need for further training for interpreters to achieve paraprofessional and professional qualifications to work across Western Australia.

6.118   The Committee reiterates its remarks earlier in this chapter that there needs to be dramatic progress in regard to training Indigenous language interpreters for working in technically difficult specialist areas, such as

justice and health. With health targets a large factor in Closing the Gap, interpreting and translating is of urgent importance. There remains high number of Indigenous people in contact with the justice and health systems, therefore the Committee considers there is further need for accessible interpreter training to take more interpreters to accreditation at the professional level.

6.119   The Committee considers such training to achieve paraprofessional and professional level qualifications should be accessible across Australia. There are numerous challenges with providing training and accreditation in remote Australia. On-the-job models of training delivery and online training technologies such as that delivered by TAFE SA hold promise to enable flexible and more cost-effective training delivery.

6.120   The Committee recommends that governments include interpreter training on a national scale as part of the consideration of the development of the national framework for the effective supply and use of Indigenous language interpreters and translators.

6.121   The Committee commends NAAJA and other justice and health providers which are helping to train Indigenous interpreters in the complex terminology in these sectors. The Committee supports the notion of KIS to support working partnerships between justice and health agencies and Indigenous interpreters.

Recommendation 26 - Interpreter training

6.122   **The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government, as part of developing the national framework for the effective supply and use of competent Indigenous language interpreters and translators, allocate resourcing to provide Indigenous interpreters with accessible training to achieve paraprofessional and professional levels.**

6.123   There is need for qualified interpreters to work with government services. As NAATI implied, there is a need for further training and qualification of Indigenous interpreters to professional level to appropriately provide a service in the areas of health and justice. At present, NAATI is not funded by governments to provide testing in Indigenous languages.

6.124   There are too many cases of Indigenous people going before the courts and not having access to a professional interpreting service. The Committee believes Indigenous people deserve the same access to a professional interpreting service that is available through the Translating

and Interpreting Service National to migrants and other Australians who do not speak and understand SAE.

6.125   The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government work with the states and territories to provide ongoing funding to NAATI for the testing and accreditation of Indigenous interpreters.

Recommendation 27 - Accreditation funding

6.126   **The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government, in partnership with the state and territory governments, ensure dedicated and ongoing funding to the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) for Indigenous language interpreter accreditation to paraprofessional and professional level.**

7

Preserving languages for future generations

7.1 Throughout the inquiry the Committee heard evidence about how critical the recording, storage and access of language materials was to both the maintenance and revival of Indigenous languages. These language materials comprise a range of different formats, including audio and video recordings, word lists, grammars, dictionaries and historical documents.

7.2 Language materials can be used to develop resources to ensure the transmission of languages and cultural knowledge from one generation to the next (for example, in children's books), or to recover lost or 'sleeping' languages. Therefore, good record keeping is integral for preserving languages for future generations.

7.3 The Committee heard evidence that the digitisation of language materials is vital both to preserving languages in the long term, and to ensuring that resources are accessible for people wishing to maintain or revive their Indigenous languages.

7.4 This chapter places an emphasis on enhancing networks as a practical method to ensure that Indigenous languages are preserved for the future, and examines best practice examples of good record keeping, including the sharing of new technologies to document languages and training. The chapter examines the range of evidence the Committee received in relation to the preservation of Indigenous languages, including the important role of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) as the largest repository for Indigenous languages material in Australia.

Enhancing existing networks

7.5   Currently the Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) program is the main source of funding for Indigenous languages maintenance and revival, and therefore forms a vital hub in the network of organisations and individuals who are engaged in language work.

7.6   The Office for the Arts has a network of Project Officers, which consists of staff based in Canberra and National Network offices located around the country. The role of network staff is:

> to act as the first point of contact for stakeholders within the regions, conduct detailed assessment of funding applications against the current guidelines, undertake risk assessments, manage funding agreements with organisations (including the monitoring and progression of activities) and to assist organisations, if needed, to meet reporting requirements. [1]

7.7   As ILS is one of a number of Indigenous programs run through the Office for the Arts, most staff have multiple responsibilities and do not work solely on administering ILS.

7.8   The Committee received evidence about the importance of regional language centres and other organisations that support the language maintenance and revival work of a number of communities, and who work to enhance a growing network.

7.9   For example, the Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre (MRALC) in NSW offer support for Aboriginal communities who want to revitalise their languages. MRALC currently supports seven languages along the NSW north coast. MRALC commented that they:

> work closely with Elders, and local language, culture and educational organisations to conduct research, publish accessible grammars–dictionaries and develop engaging educational courses and resources.[2]

7.10   The Mobile Language Team from the University of Adelaide provides similar support to Aboriginal communities in South Australia, particularly for language programs in Wirangu (in Ceduna) and Ngarrindjeri (in the Coorong region). According to the Mobile Language Team:

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1   Office for the Arts, *Submission 127a*, p. 4.

2   Muurrbay–Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre, *Submission 9,* Attachment 1, p. 1.

These programs are strongly driven by community, and are seen
as key initiatives that contribute to a strong, distinctive and
cohesive cultural identity, and that have resulted in a set of
teaching materials that will form the basis for cultural education
activities for generations to come.[3]

7.11   Another excellent example of an organisation working within a region to
        support a range of communities to preserve their languages was the
        Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation based in Tenant Creek. The
        centre supports the 16 language groups of the Barkly region of the
        Northern Territory.[4]

7.12   In the linguistically diverse Kimberley region of Western Australia, the
        Kimberley Language Resource Centre (KLRC) supports communities to
        provide assistance with language continuation for around 30 languages
        that are still spoken.[5] Similarly, the Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal
        Language Centre supports the 31 languages of the Pilbara area of Western
        Australia.[6]

7.13   The Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL) is the peak
        body for Aboriginal languages in Victoria and 'supports the operation of
        five Community Language Programs who work locally to research and
        develop language resources for the community'.[7]

7.14   The Committee heard evidence from groups that were formed to help
        facilitate the networking of Aboriginal language centres and projects,
        provide training and to provide an advocacy role. For example, the
        Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group (ESALG) 'was established in
        2008 to identify and address issues which are common to Eastern
        Australian Aboriginal Language communities'.[8] The ESALG is:

    looking at ways to support community language programs, and to
    set priorities for the effective use of the resources available and the
    engagement of a wide range of organisations to support the shared
    goals.[9]

7.15   Another key organisation is the Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity
        (RNLD); a not for profit organisation with over 650 members who 'are

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3   The Mobile Language Team, *Submission 90*, p. 2.
4   Papulu Apparr-kari Aboriginal Corporation, *Submission 49*, p. 1.
5   Kimberley Language Resource Centre, *Submission 38*, p. 1.
6   Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre, *Submission 78*, p. 1.
7   Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL), *Submission 152*, p. 1.
8   Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group (ESALG), *Submission 25*, p. 1.
9   ESALG, *Submission 25*, p. 1.

working at all levels nationally and internationally to support and sustain Indigenous languages through diverse documentation and revitalisation activities'. [10] RNLD supports language activities through /the provision of training, resource-sharing, networking, and advocacy. [11]

7.16   A key role these types of organisations play is facilitating the networking of people working with Indigenous languages to share ideas, experiences and skills. The ILS program funds the biennial National Pulima Indigenous Language and Technology Conference, which has been organised by the Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre. In describing the importance of the conference, Faith Baisden from the ESALG said that 'apart from all of the information that people get to share, it is picking each other's brains and getting moral support to go back out to your little centre and do what you do'.[12]

The Federation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and Culture

7.17   The Federation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and Culture (FATSILC) was established in 1991 as the peak body for community based Indigenous language programs in Australia.

7.18   FATSILC's objectives include:

- Ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are considered as core issue in the development of all policy and legislation relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia

- Support and the maintenance of cultural practices and traditions so that they will survive for future generations

- Proved information and advice to government, non-government agencies and the general community relation to language issues

- Contribute to the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language policies and programs

- Provide consultative support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language management committees, language centres, community groups including individuals, families and communities

- Promote the recognition and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language skills, experience and

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10   RNLD, *Submission 130*, p. 2.

11   RNLD, *Submission 130*, p .2.

12   F Baisden, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2011, p. 20.

knowledge in languages, culture, arts and heritage through educational and employment programs, and

■ Encourage the training and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language workers and specialist language speakers.[13]

7.19   In previous years, FATSILC was funded to publish the *Voice of the Land* magazine, which provided a forum for people working with Indigenous languages to share 'program news, publications and language research, initiatives and conferences, cultural events and displays and any actions on policy matters and items of general interest to all.' [14]

7.20   Previously, FATSILC received funding through the ILS program but that funding ceased. As a consequence, the organisation has recently undergone a significant restructure and has reduced the number of elected board members from 17 to nine.[15]

7.21   The Chair of FATSILC, Mrs Barbara McGillivray, acknowledged that the formation and operation of FATSILC had been a difficult process and pointed to governance issues as being a major hurdle for the organisation:

> FATSILC I suppose has had its ups and downs, if I can say that. It has never been successful in the sense of having a national manager. It just did not work for some reason, and it has taken us quite a while to get to the stage where we were at last year, prior to 18 June, to push towards trying to get a restructure, because we knew that our board was too big. We had a board of 17 directors and 17 shadow directors, and it was just too hard for us to achieve good outcomes. It has been really hard trying to build our organisation up. [16]

7.22   Mrs McGillivray said that the restructure of FATSILC has resulted in a shift in focus for the organisation, towards advocating for communities who are working to preserve or revitalise their languages. [17]

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13   Federation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and Culture (FATSILC), *Submission 97*, p. 2.
14   FATSILC, *Submission 97*, p. 2.
15   B McGillivray, FATSILC, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 18.
16   B McGillivray, FATSILC, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 20.
17   B McGillivray, FATSILC, *Committee Hansard*, Broome, 30 April 2012, p. 20.

National Indigenous Languages Centre

7.23   The National Indigenous Languages Survey (NILS) report recommended a feasibility study to be undertaken into the establishment of a national Indigenous languages centre. According to the NILS report:

> The functions of a National Indigenous Languages Centre would include high-level documentation of the languages and their situation, policy development and advice, a forum for Indigenous views, and either training of language workers or close liaison with a body or bodies carrying out this training.[18]

7.24   The 2005 NILS report stated that the feasibility study would need to work with key stakeholders, including:

- Relevant government departments led by the Language and Culture Branch (now located in the Office for the Arts).

- FATSILC

- AIATSIS, and

- Representatives of regional language centres and people working with Indigenous languages.

7.25   The *NILS report 2005* asserted that:

> Discussions on the establishment of a National Indigenous Languages Centre should consider the option of stronger formal links between these existing agencies as a key first stage in the development of the proposed centre.[19]

7.26   Part of the Commonwealth Government's National Indigenous Languages policy[20] is to conduct a feasibility study of a national Indigenous languages centre, although no action is being undertaken presently to initiate this study. Furthermore, it is difficult to determine what the feasibility study would comprise.

7.27   The Committee heard that both British Columbia (Canada) and New Zealand have centralised bodies dealing with Indigenous language maintenance and preservation.

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18   Office for the Arts, 'National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005' <www.arts. gov.au?sites/default/files/pdfs/nils-report-2005.pdf> accessed 3 July 2012, p. 107.

19   Office for the Arts, 'National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005' <www.arts. gov.au?sites/default/files/pdfs/nils-report-2005.pdf> accessed 3 July 2012, p. 107.

20   Office for the Arts, 'Indigenous Languages – A National Approach 2009', <www.arts.gov.au/indigenous/languages>, accessed 3 July 2012.

7.28   The Committee received evidence that the provincial government of British Columbia was supporting Indigenous languages maintenance and revitalisation through the development of a centralised government agency. Professor Lorna Williams told the Committee that, in British Columbia:

> The First Peoples Heritage, Language and Culture Council is a provincial Crown agency and so it is an agency of the Crown. But all of the council members and the directors and all of the advisory are first nations or Indigenous...

> It is financial resources, but also the fact that it is one of the Crown agencies of the province, so there is reporting to parliament and it is supported by legislation. That it is part of the government is what also makes the difference.[21]

7.29   The Australian Human Rights Commission referred to positive changes in language use in New Zealand following the establishment of the Maori Language Commission, which is 'an example of the successes which can be achieved by providing a framework for a coordinated response to Indigenous language policy and promotion'.[22] While acknowledging the significant differences in the Indigenous language situations between New Zealand and Australia, the Commission recommended that:

> in consultation with the National Congress of Australia's First People, a national Indigenous languages commission be established to monitor and regulate the maintenance and revitalisation of Australian Indigenous languages. [23]

7.30   Several organisations supported the development and funding of a national agency or body in Australia. For example, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) said that 'the establishment of such a body is an essential step that goes hand-in-hand with the creation of an effective national policy framework'.[24] ANTaR proposed that the establishment of a national centre could enable:

- the development of a consistent policy framework
- more effective use of the considerable expertise in Indigenous languages across Australia
- greater consistency in the administration of funding, and

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21   L Williams, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 September 2011, p. 2.
22   Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 31a*, p. 4.
23   Australian Human Rights Commission, *Submission 31a*, p. 4.
24   ANTaR, *Submission 23*, p. 108.

- improved quality control in the delivery of programs, and more effective, transparent monitoring of their effectiveness.[25]

7.31   According to the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mr Tom Calma, such an organisation would have 'its eye on the big picture and can apply expertise to a complex language environment'.[26]

7.32   The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples (the Congress) expressed its 'disappointment that the commitment to progress a National Indigenous Languages Centre has not been acted upon by the Australian Government'.[27] The Congress urged the Committee to consider recommending the development of a national centre.

7.33   Conversely, Ms Sally Basser from the Office for the Arts did not see a need for a new national centre, and said that:

> our view would be that there is an existing body called AIATSIS which we fund to do a lot of language work. If one wanted to deem something or create something as a national language centre or service, one would build on what is already there with AIATSIS. There is a wealth of research and content in that organisation. It could perform that role in the future. There is an organisation that we have. We do not need a new one.[28]

7.34   In response, the Congress urged caution on the potential expansion of the role of AIATSIS:

> Congress notes that AIATSIS is a Commonwealth statutory authority within the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, therefore our concerns about independence from Government, and emphasis on community control, apply equally here. Any proposal to expand AIATSIS (or indeed another existing organisation) would need to be carefully considered after consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language experts and communities and would also require the allocation of substantial additional funding to ensure that the organisation can appropriately manage an expanded mandate.[29]

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25   ANTaR, *Submission 23*, p. 8.

26   Australian Human Rights Commission, *Social Justice Report 2009*, 2010, p. 72.

27   National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, *Submission 139a*, p. 4.

28   S Basser, Office for the Arts, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 22 March 2012, p. 7.

29   National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, *Submission 139a*, p. 12.

7.35   Mr John Hobson was supportive of the idea of a national centre but urged caution because he thought 'it could be dangerous if it was poorly implemented or if it was set up in such a way that it was a controlling entity rather than a facilitating entity'.[30]

7.36   Mr Hobson commended the work of regional language centres, but said that 'there is a great need for national leadership in the field' and that 'often there is a gulf of information about what works and what does not work'.[31]

7.37   Mr Daryn McKenny's idea for a national centre placed an emphasis on empowering Indigenous people and equipping them with skills to maintain or revive their languages. Mr McKenny said that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

> need to join together. We do need to support each other. We need to be in a position to be able to recognise the diversity which does exist. This type of vision which I see for how we are evolving cannot all take place at government or institute level as such.[32]

7.38   The ESALG supported the development of state based language centres in providing specialist support for local language activities, and said that:

> the funding and resourcing of state based language centres has been considered by some to be an effective method of utilising high cost services and skills, for use on a needs basis by regional programs. These services could include linguist skills, administrative support, publication and resource preparation, mobile language teams, recording, negotiation with Government agencies, training and skills development.[33]

7.39   As Chapter 3 mentioned, the NSW Government has established the Centre for Aboriginal Languages Coordination and Development (CALCD). Mr James Christian from Aboriginal Affairs NSW said that the Indigenous community representatives that comprise the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group will 'direct language work priorities for the centre. The centre will provide informed advice to the NSW government on the development of a revised Aboriginal languages policy and strategic plan'.[34]

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30   J Hobson, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 13 October 2012, p. 4.
31   J Hobson, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 13 October 2012, p. 4.
32   D McKenny, *Committee Hansard*, Newcastle, 9 September 2011, p. 12.
33   ESALG, *Submission 25*, p. 6.
34   J Christian, Aboriginal Affairs NSW, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 18 November 2011, p. 13.

7.40   Aboriginal Affairs NSW supported the development and funding of state based language centres. It urged the Committee to consider the Commonwealth Government working through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to establish:

> State Aboriginal Language Centres to coordinate language work and priorities across the State, and to identify and support regions and communities not supported by a Regional Language Centre.[35]

7.41   In addition, Aboriginal Affairs NSW, proposed that the Commonwealth Government develop support through COAG for:

> the establishment of targeted regional language centres to coordinate and provide on the ground and hands on support to Aboriginal communities working to revive or maintain their languages. Aboriginal communities require sustained assistance to identify language recordings and primary resources, develop language learning materials and implement language learning strategies.[36]

Committee comment

7.42   The Committee praises the work of all organisations, communities and individuals who are striving, often with very limited resources, to preserve Indigenous languages for future generations.

7.43   The Committee understands that FATSILC has had a difficult time in providing a national advocacy role for communities working with their languages, and acknowledges the pragmatic decision of FATSILC to restructure its organisation.

7.44   The Committee is not convinced that the creation of a national centre would work to better support the maintenance and revival of Indigenous languages. The Committee has reservations about adding another layer of bureaucracy to a network of organisations and people who are working to preserve their languages from the ground up. The Committee views a 'top down' hierarchical arrangement between a new national centre and the pre-existing, grass-roots network as inherently complicated, potentially wasteful in terms of the limited resources dedicated to Indigenous languages, and potentially damaging for programs that currently are working well.

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35   Aboriginal Affairs NSW, *Submission 98*, p. 3.
36   Aboriginal Affairs NSW, *Submission 98*, p. 3.

7.45   The Committee believes that effort should be focussed on enhancing existing networks and organisations to improve their capacity to conduct language preservation and revitalisation work. As recommended later in this chapter, the Committee sees benefit in funding AIATSIS to play an enhanced role in archiving, research and support for Indigenous languages.

7.46   The Committee notes that the ILS program is a key element in the network of organisations working with Indigenous languages in Australia. The Committee encourages closer links between ILS, its network, and AIATSIS. The Committee also encourages the sharing of and access to language materials developed with the support of ILS program funding.

7.47   In reviewing the evidence on the work that is presently being undertaken to preserve Indigenous languages, the Committee concludes that successful Indigenous language maintenance and revival activities share a number of important characteristics. They:

- can access appropriate funding

- are community driven by people that are passionate about working together to preserve their languages

- are integrated into a range of other cultural activities that emphasise the importance of the transmission of cultural knowledge

- can draw upon language materials and a solid knowledge base (including having access to linguistic expertise)

- have access to appropriate technology, and training in its use

- are integrated into a network of support, and

- can draw upon existing resources and apply them to a local context.

7.48   The Committee sees great merit in continued support for regional language centres as a way to provide practical and specialist support for people wanting to maintain or revive their Indigenous languages.

7.49   The Committee strongly encourages states and territories to take a regional responsibility for funding local language centres based on the principles outlined above. The Committee is encouraged by the efforts of the NSW Government in this regard, and believes that there is substantial scope and opportunity for other jurisdictions to play a similar role in providing community support for Indigenous languages.

7.50   The Committee has recommended an increase in funding of the ILS program to continue to support language projects across Australia.

However, the Committee firmly believes it is not governments'
responsibility wholly to fund language centres or language projects.

7.51   Solid foundations in both Indigenous languages and English must be built
through partnerships between governments and communities.

7.52   The Committee considers that recommendations in this report work
towards opening up market opportunities for language centres through
increasing the use of interpreting services, opening opportunities for
philanthropic and private sector contributions, creating demand for the
production of resources and collaboration with schools.

7.53   The Committee's long term vision is for community owned and operated
language centres, which respond to the increased demand for Indigenous
languages services and for these services to be valued nationwide.

Access to resources

7.54   As outlined in Chapter 2, of the 250 Australian Indigenous languages used
at colonisation, it is estimated only about 18 remain spoken by significant
populations. Some languages are spoken by only a few people and have
been revitalised to be taught and spoken once more. Other languages have
an active speaking population but not necessarily a documented record of
the language.

7.55   The Committee received evidence of the need for better knowledge and
skill sharing within the network of people working to preserve their
Indigenous languages. Mr Hobson said that 'to some extent one can feel
like there are a lot of people rushing around with fire extinguishers,
because it is an emergency and people are doing whatever they think or
hope might work'.[37]

Preserving languages through technology and training

7.56   The Committee heard that two of the important ways that the government
can enhance existing networks are through the development and sharing
of new technologies to preserve languages, and the training of
communities to use those technologies and other best practices in their
language work.

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37   J Hobson, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 13 October 2012, p. 4.

7.57   For example, Mr McKenny, the General Manager of the Miromaa
        Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre, said that:

> Aboriginal people today have struggled in finding the tools and
> the training to be able to assist them, to empower them to do
> language conservation themselves. We have had that struggle. We
> have had that problem ourselves. It has been through our learning,
> our experiences and our mistakes that we have set about creating
> those tools, using technology to assist us. [38]

7.58   In terms of new technologies, the Committee was impressed by the quality
        and usefulness of the Miromaa computer program and the training and
        support that was provided by the Miromaa Aboriginal Language and
        Technology Centre.[39] The Committee heard evidence that the Miromaa
        program is an easy to use database that helps people working with
        languages gather, organise, analyse and produce material to aid in
        language work.

7.59   Mr McKenny, said that:

> Our work in language conservation, documentation and training
> is not only recognised nationally but internationally, as not just
> necessary but inspirational, empowering and crucial in equipping
> Aboriginal people with the skills needed to rightfully manage the
> many aspects of caring for our languages.[40]

7.60   Mr McKenny said that the Centre is supporting over 100 language based
        activities nationally and is providing training in locations throughout
        Australia. The Miromaa software is available to Aboriginal and Torres
        Strait Islander people to use for free. Mr McKenny commented that:

> the six dialects of the Torres Strait Islands are being digitised for
> the first time by the people up at Thursday Island at Tagai State
> College. We sent a team of our staff up there. They sat with the
> people in the Torres Strait Islands to give them training. They are
> now digitising it. We are working closely with the Victorian
> Aboriginal Corporation for Languages based in Melbourne. The 38
> languages of Victoria are now being digitised, captured, for the
> first time through the aid of what we have developed. [41]

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38   D McKenny, *Committee Hansard*, Newcastle, 9 September 2011, p. 11.

39   D McKenny, *Committee Hansard*, Newcastle, 9 September 2011, pp. 9-15; N Hatfield, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 6 October 2011, p. 10; RNLD, *Submission 130*, p. 6.

40   D McKenny, *Committee Hansard*, Newcastle, 9 September 2011, p. 9.

41   D McKenny, *Committee Hansard*, Newcastle, 9 September 2011, p. 11.

7.61   As previously mentioned, the Miromaa Aboriginal Language and
        Technology Centre organises and hosts the biennial National Pulima
        Indigenous Language and Technology Conference, and has developed the
        'Our Languages' website.[42] Mr McKenny described the website as a way
        to increase public awareness of the importance of language activities by
        'showcasing or giving all language activities around Australia an
        opportunity to have a presence, to tell their story and to share their
        experiences'. [43]

7.62   Dr. William Fogarty and Dr. Inge Kral said that technologies are driving
        language use in Indigenous communities more broadly. They provided
        the Committee with evidence that these activities were being driven by
        Indigenous youth:

> Indigenous youth in remote communities are engaging with new
> digital technologies at a rapid rate. They are demonstrating their
> competence in this domain, particularly by engaging in creative
> cultural theatre, festival, multimedia and music production or
> digital cultural heritage projects. Such activities commonly
> incorporate Indigenous languages (e.g. recording songs in
> language on GarageBand or ProTools computer software, or
> translating and transcribing language subtitles in film or other
> audiovisual recordings). Youth with computer and media skills
> are also taking on roles archiving and documenting local
> community knowledge in databases of heritage materials where
> repatriated items are enriched with annotations often in
> Indigenous language.[44]

7.63   Ray Kelly Jnr. conveyed similar sentiments in Newcastle, saying that:

> ... access to technology I believe is going to be a big thing for our
> languages. It is a hassle to get any young people these days off
> computers, off Facebook, off any type of technology. I feel that if
> we can incorporate our language into those types of mediums we
> will be fine.[45]

7.64   The roll out of the National Broadband Network (NBN) was greeted with
        optimism by Dr Nick Thieberger, who said that:

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42   Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre, 'Our Languages',
     accessed 22 August 2012.

43   D McKenny, *Committee Hansard*, Newcastle, 9 September 2011, p. 10.

44   I Kraal and B Fogarty, *Submission 20*, p. 9.

45   R Kelly Jnr, *Committee Hansard*, Newcastle, 9 September 2011, p. 3.

> with the rollout of the NBN I think we have to see that there is going to be a lot more access in remote communities to repositories of information and we have to make sure that those repositories have good, digitised information and that it is locatable so that people can locate records of their languages.[46]

7.65   The Indigenous Remote Communication Association (IRCA) were cautious about the benefits of the NBN to remote communities. They said that:

> For remote Indigenous people, the best communications technologies enable audio-visual (face-to-face) communications where verbal language, sign and body language can all be conveyed. Text-based communications (email, letters, websites etc) is not appropriate for many remote Indigenous people. The NBN model of satellite-delivered broadband (asymmetrical, high latency, shared contention) to remote Australia is likely to limit the types of broadband applications such as videoconferencing, tele-health & interactive teaching applications and ICTV. Further, it will not support the expansion of mobile coverage to remote Indigenous communities. [47]

7.66   IRCA gave evidence that improved access to technology more broadly in Indigenous communities was needed. They said that:

> Beyond the rollout of broadband infrastructure, there is a need for improved IT access facilities, post-school training, and development of appropriate internet services and relevant content.[48]

7.67   In terms of training, the Committee was particularly impressed by the work of Mr McKenny and RNLD. RNLD has developed the Documenting and Revitalising Indigenous Languages program (DRIL). The DRIL program aims to:

> increase the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in sustainable language work, and strengthen the ability of individuals, family groups, community groups, and Indigenous organisations to develop, run and manage their own language projects independently.[49]

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46   N Thieberger, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 16 February 2012, p. 2.

47   Indigenous Remote Communication Association (IRCA), *Submission 68a*, p. 3.

48   IRCA, *Submission 68a*, p. 3.

49   RNLD, *Submission 130*, p. 2.

7.68   While DRIL is 'designed to complement the existing Indigenous languages programs provided in educational institutions', according to RNLD the program also:

> facilitates the stronger use of facilities such as AIATSIS and the National Library through training community members in the use of searchable archives, the rights to materials and the methods to access them. DRIL bridges between community language workers and linguists who aspire to offer more practical assistance to projects. Such partnerships are critical to the sustainability of language projects. [50]

Committee comment

7.69   The Committee commends those people and organisations that are drawing on new technologies and developing training techniques to empower communities to preserve their languages. The Committee sees this as a vital element in improving the capacity of the existing network to carry out the important work they are undertaking, and to enhance those skills in the future.

7.70   The Committee considers new technologies are the way forward for enabling people, particularly young people, to gain skills and knowledge in Indigenous language maintenance and revival.

7.71   The Committee notes that National Indigenous Television (NITV) is now part of the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) family of digital, free-to-air channels. NITV is launching a new dedicated Indigenous television channel that every Australian household will be able to watch.

7.72   The Committee commends this move and the positive flow on effects this will have for a wider recognition of the value of Indigenous languages in Australia. The Committee is of the view that improving the exposure of the Australian public to Indigenous languages and culture will have significant positive effects for reconciliation and community wellbeing.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

7.73   AIATSIS is Australia's leading research, collecting and publishing institution in the field of Australian Indigenous studies. AIATSIS is a statutory authority that operates under the *AIATSIS Act 1989*.

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50   RNLD, *Submission 130*, p. 9.

7.74   AIATSIS's Library and Audiovisual Archive (AVA) are responsible for managing Australia's most extensive collections of printed, audio and visual materials on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history and societies. To date, AIATSIS has been acting as a 'de facto national archive for language material'.[51]

7.75   In 2009, the Library's 'Australian Indigenous Languages Collection' was placed on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Memory of the World register to recognise its extensive and unique holdings.[52]

7.76   However, AIATSIS is neither required under its legislated function to carry out the comprehensive collection and storage of Indigenous language material, nor is it currently funded to do so. According to AIATSIS:

> The fact that the current language collection functions as a national archive is largely due to the foresight of several generations of the collections staff, and also due to the research conducted on Indigenous languages by AIATSIS researchers and researchers funded by the AIATSIS Research Grants Program (which was suspended for the 2012-2013 financial year due to the lack of resources).[53]

7.77   Under a three year funding agreement through the Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) program in 2010-11, AIATSIS has established an Indigenous Languages Unit. Under the agreement, the unit will:

> be the national coordinator linking Indigenous language organisations, educational and research institutions and government agencies. Its new staff will also run the second National Indigenous Languages Survey (NILS2) and community language workshops, and will work to improve communications and dissemination of information about Indigenous languages.[54]

7.78   Of concern to John Hobson from the Koori Centre was the decision by AIATSIS to discontinue its research grants scheme, which has been funding 'high quality linguistic, anthropological and archaeological

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51   AIATSIS, *Submission 154*, p. 3.
52   AIATSIS, *Submission 154*, p. 3.
53   AIATSIS, *Submission 154*, p. 3.
54   AIATSIS, 'Annual Report 2010-11' <www.aiatsis.gov.au/corporate/docs/AR10-11/Output%201-Research.pdf> accessed 24 July 2012.

research nationally for the last two decades'.[55] According to AIATSIS, the difficult decision was made because:

> AIATSIS funding from Government has fallen steadily over the past decade, in inflation-adjusted terms. Well argued submissions to Government over a number of past budgetary cycles seeking increased base funding, and/or exemption from the efficiency dividend, have been unsuccessful. We have now passed the point where all legislated functions, which relate to both our research and our related archival collection responsibilities, can be delivered, and in this context Council took the view that decisive action was called for.
>
> Whilst Council noted, and appreciates, the Government's decision to exempt AIATSIS from the additional 2.5% efficiency dividend in 2012-13, this will have no positive impact on ongoing funding.[56]

7.79   John Hobson thought that this:

> dramatically evidences the tenuous state of funding available to Australian language conservation and revitalisation and suggests an urgent need for the establishment of a substantial and ongoing funding base to support research into Indigenous languages and cultures into the future, as well as a significant boost in the funding levels for AIATSIS itself. [57]

7.80   The Committee heard concerns that the centralisation of language materials at AIATSIS made it difficult for people in communities to access that material. The Centre for Indigenous Technology Information and Engineering Solutions (CITIES) said that AIATSIS' rigorous protocols on accessing its resources were onerous for many people and communities. CITIES said that the process of getting appropriate permissions to use resources can 'drag on too long and the community loses faith that they will be able to access their resources'.[58] CITIES said that:

> The protocols around knowledge sharing hinder the process of returning these to the communities who are related to the speakers through language or kinship. While available in the AIATSIS

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55   Koori Centre, University of Sydney, *Submission 7a*, p. 1.

56   AIATSIS, *About AIATSIS Research Grants*, < www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/ grants/grants.html>, accessed 27 July 2012.

57   Koori Centre, University of Sydney, *Submission 7a*, p. 2.

58   Centre for Indigenous Technology Information and Engineering Solutions (CITIES), *Submission 24a*, p. 3.

> audiovisual library, Indigenous people are denied access by distance and the lack of information about what is there. [59]

7.81   Similarly the Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group (ESALG) commented that 'community members feel a sense of disconnection from the collecting institutions in which much of their historical language information is held', and that there was a 'lack of staff within these institutions to support community in research ventures'.[60]

7.82   In response, AIATSIS detailed its protocols to accessing material:

> The AIATSIS Library and the Audiovisual Archive (AVA) provide access to materials in its collection in accordance with:
>
> ■ The Copyright Act 1968 (mainly S48-S53);
>
> ■ The AIATSIS Act 1989 (section 41(1) which requires individual access and use agreements with owners or their delegates as specified in deposit agreements and section 41 (2) which recognises the possible existence of sensitive material in the collection other than that covered by section 41(1);
>
> ■ The Privacy Act 1988;
>
> ■ The AIATSIS Audiovisual Archive Code of Ethics.
>
> AlATSIS does not own most of the unpublished material in its collections. In many cases individual manuscript or audiovisual collections will have their own deposit agreements which are a form of legal contract where the Institute is the custodian of the material and where ownership is retained by the depositor.
>
> The Library and AVA follow access protocols that are defined by the above legislation and long-standing AlATSIS practice. The protocols try to ensure that the intent of the legislation is observed and the interests of the creators/owners (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) of the material are acknowledged in the provision of access to their material. The protocols were also designed to protect personal or sensitive cultural information.
>
> The following factors contribute to the time it takes to process a request for material held in the AlATSIS collection:
>
> ■ Some agreements are quite restrictive whereby permission must be requested each time the item is copied.
>
> ■ Owners may be difficult to locate or slow to respond, and very occasionally may deny access.

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59   CITIES, *Submission 24*, p. 4.

60   ESALG, *Submission 25*, p. 4.

- Some materials are not in a useable format, such as reels and cassettes. They need to be digitised before copies can be distributed. Digitising to archival standards is a slow, labour-intensive and expensive process.

- Some materials are not adequately documented, for example, photographic collections may be deposited without captions and many audio collections arrive without documentation. This can make material relevant to a client's request hard to find.

- The limited funding has compelled AIATSIS' digitisation program to target the most 'at risk' collections in its race against time to preserve holdings, as older formats deteriorate or playback equipment becomes obsolete or difficult to maintain. The unfortunate outcome of this is limited servicing of requests from community and researchers. That is, the AVA currently only accepts requests for digitised materials.

- Limited staffing has caused the Library to implement a target of a 25 working day response time for requests.

> On the other hand, the number of requests for materials held in the AVA increased by 46% between 2008-2009 (431 requests) and 2010-2011 (631 requests) while the number of the staff remained the same.[61]

7.83   Dr Kazuko Obato from AIATSIS stressed that digitisation of the AVA was critical for ensuring that language materials were appropriately preserved, and for making them accessible. Dr Obato said that:

> the process is very slow for us to actually create the conditions to access the material and also to digitise the material. Something we are looking at is how we could improve these kinds of obstacles. One problem is the lack of funding.[62]

7.84   Dr Doug Marmion from AIATSIS agreed. Referring to the range of formats of materials held in the AVA, he said that it 'is a major project to digitise all of these into standard formats which will ensure their long-term preservation and usefulness'.[63]

Committee comment

7.85   The Committee is aware there are community concerns about access to Indigenous languages material at the AIATSIS archive.

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61   AIATSIS, *Submission 154*, p. 1.

62   K Obato, AIATSIS, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 7 July 2011, p. 1.

63   D Marmion, AIATSIS, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 7 July 2011, p. 1.

7.86   The Committee believes that community access to such materials is critical for the preservation and revitalisation of Indigenous languages.

7.87   The Committee is of the view that the best method of preserving Indigenous languages for the future is through good record keeping, which involves the deposition of language materials in a central archive with proven good archiving and cataloguing practices, and the timely digitisation of materials.

7.88   The Committee believes a central archive of Indigenous languages materials has the benefit of ensuring that communities have access to languages materials when those materials are appropriately stored, catalogued and in a digital format.

7.89   The Committee has reviewed AIATSIS' protocols on accessing its archives and concludes that those protocols are consistent with the relevant Acts and represent robust and appropriate practice. The protocols adequately consider the complex issues around ownership and the cultural sensitivities and financial aspects that may ensue.

7.90   The Committee commends AIATSIS for carrying out the role of a de facto national Indigenous languages archive when it has not been specifically funded to do so, commends the staff who have managed the collection over several decades, and the researchers who have been responsible for generating much of the material held in the AVA.

7.91   The Committee is of the view that AIATSIS is capable of carrying out comprehensive collection, storage and digitisation of Indigenous language material if it is appropriately resourced to do so.

7.92   The Committee urges the Commonwealth Government to support AIATSIS as the central repository responsible for preserving Australia's Indigenous languages. This support needs to be directed specifically towards promoting the timely digitisation of the archive's world-leading collection, and equitable access for people wishing to use the collection.

Recommendation 28 – Dedicated Indigenous language archive

7.93   **The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government include in the 2013-14 Budget increased resources for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to carry out the storage and digitisation of Indigenous language materials.**

7.94   The Committee is concerned that budgetary constraints have forced
        AIATSIS to discontinue its research grants program, which has been one
        of few avenues for Indigenous people and other researchers to fund
        research into Indigenous languages for the past two decades. The
        Committee urges the Commonwealth Government to consult with
        AIATSIS to determine an appropriate and sustainable funding model in
        order for it to recommence its research grants program.

Recommendation 29 – AIATSIS research funding

7.95   **The Committee recommends the Commonwealth Government consult
        with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
        Studies to determine an appropriate and sustainable funding model in
        order for it to recommence its research grants program in the 2013-14
        Budget.**

7.96   The Committee reiterates its view that good record keeping is critical to
        the preservation of Indigenous languages. The Committee is aware that
        ILS funding recipients generate a wealth of Indigenous language material,
        some of which is deposited in the AIATSIS archive. The Committee
        considers it essential that a copy of language material and resources
        assembled through funding granted under the ILS program should be
        deposited with AIATSIS.

Recommendation 30 – Archiving of ILS language material

7.97   **The Committee recommends that the Indigenous Languages Support
        (ILS) program funding guidelines be amended to include a stipulation
        that a copy of any language materials developed by ILS funding
        recipients must be deposited with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal
        and Torres Strait Islander Studies' Library or Audio-Visual Archive.**

Concluding comments

7.98 The Committee has presented a set of recommendations that chart a future for Indigenous languages and assist our Indigenous youth to grow strong in culture and in heritage and with the skills and opportunities to participate fully in the Australian society and economy.

7.99 Incorporating an acknowledgment of the place and importance of Indigenous languages in Closing the Gap will ensure that languages become part of the delivery and the outcomes of the many programs delivered under this framework by Commonwealth, state and territory governments.

7.100 Expanding the ILS program, and prioritising the development of language nests, will enhance the opportunities for communities to develop language resources and take up the role of teaching their children. The use of bilingual education in areas where the Indigenous first language is dominant must be considered. The overwhelming evidence was that children learning in a bilingual environment can grow and prosper in a bilingual or multilingual way and have improved Standard Australian English outcomes.

7.101 NAPLAN tests may contribute to the disengagement of non English speaking students at a young age. NAPLAN seeks to measure knowledge and skills across a range of competencies and language should not be a barrier to these assessments and the Committee has recommended an alternative assessment tool for all students learning English as an Additional Language/Dialect.

7.102 Establishing a national Indigenous interpreting service will enhance communications with Indigenous people around critical services, and also provide opportunities for language centres to train and employ language speakers.

7.103 Flexible and accessible career and accreditation pathways for Indigenous teachers have been a large focus. Strategies must be developed for training Indigenous language teachers and to provide school support and mentorship.

7.104 High numbers of Indigenous students with a first language or dialect other than Standard Australian English are attending schools in urban, regional and remote areas. Compulsory training in English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) for all teachers would aid teachers to provide a productive learning environment rather than a confusing one.

7.105   These are critical recommendations and the Committee urges the
         Commonwealth Government to act quickly to announce their
         implementation.

7.106   This report builds on the Mabo decision of the High Court of Australia in
         1992 which recognised the occupancy of the Indigenous peoples and their
         ongoing connection to the land. That decision was a vital step in
         redressing past wrongs and it acknowledged the richness of Indigenous
         heritage and its place as a living culture.

7.107   However, twenty years on from that decision and we have failed to close
         the gap on Indigenous disadvantage. Over these two decades billions have
         been spent providing various services, assistance and programs to
         improve outcomes for Indigenous peoples. We are making progress, but
         progress is slow. And over these two decades we have seen the decline of
         many Indigenous languages just as we have seen the rise of Indigenous
         youth disconnected from their culture, failing at schooling, lacking a sense
         of identity or future, and ending up in the criminal justice system as the
         Committee reported in the 2011 report *Doing Time – Time for Doing*.

7.108   Sadly, it is these tragic outcomes that dominate many media stories.
         However there are positive stories that are not being heard – and many of
         these stories are about language and about communities working together
         to preserve, revitalise and sustain their Indigenous languages. These
         communities are raising their children strong in first language and able to
         speak SAE and make choices for their future.

7.109   It is the desire of this Committee that in 2012, twenty years since the Mabo
         land decision, the next vital decision is made by governments and by all
         Australians to recognise and value Indigenous languages. Through land
         and language we can close the gap.

7.110   The Committee believes all Australians should have pride in the
         Indigenous languages of our country. Indigenous languages bring with
         them rich cultural heritage, knowledge and a spiritual connection to the
         land.

7.111   Yurranydjil Dhurrkay from Galiwin'ku in North East Arnhem Land
         stated:

>   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.[64]

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64   Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures, *Submission 65*.

7.112   Language is inseparable from culture, kinship, land and family and is the foundation upon which the capacity to learn, interact and to shape identity is built. Under the Closing the Gap framework, valuing Indigenous languages can make a substantial impact in areas of education, employment, health, justice and wellbeing.

7.113   Indigenous languages will hold different meanings to different Australians. For some it is their first language, and the language of their country. For others it is the language of the area and place in which they reside. For all Australians, Indigenous languages are about who we are as a nation, about the place we call home, the country we live in, and the land we call Australia.

Mr Shayne Neumann
Chair

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Appendix A – List of submissions

1	Br John Giacon
2	Ms Margaret Opie
3	Ms Janine Oldfield
4	Dr Felicity Meakins
4a	Dr Felicity Meakins Supplementary Submission
5	Ms Nancy Sheppard
6	Mr Frank Baarda
6a	Mr Frank Baarda Supplementary Submission
7	Koori Centre, University of Sydney
7a	Koori Centre, University of Sydney Supplementary Submission
8	Department of Human Services
9	Ms Leanne Syron
10	Association of Independent Schools of South Australia
11	Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring, Language and Culture Centre
12	Youth Services, Hall Creek
13	Catholic Education Northern Territory, Diocese of Darwin
14	Mr David Allen
15	South Australia Commission for Catholic Schools
16	Concerned Australians
17	Ms Jill Vaughan
18	Teachers and Students of Cert III in Learning Endangered Aboriginal Language, Murray Bridge TAFE, South Australia
19	Ms Kathryn Gale and Ms Beth Graham

20	Dr William Fogarty and Dr Inge Kral
21	Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens' Associations
22	Commonwealth Ombudsman
23	Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation
23a	Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation Supplementary Submission
24	Centre for Indigenous Technology Information and Engineering Solutions
24a	Centre for Indigenous Technology Information and Engineering Solutions Supplementary Submission
25	Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group
26	Prof Alan Rumsey
27	Prof Francesca Merlan
28	Wadeye Indigenous teaching and other staff
29	Black Ink Press
30	Yan-nhangu Dictionary Team
31	Australian Human Rights Commission
31a	Australian Human Rights Commission Supplementary Submission
32	Mrs Catherine Winfield Johnston
33	Ms Marianne McKinnon-Kidd
34	Ms Lauren Gawne
35	Monash Country Lines Archive
36	Yirrkala School Literature Production Centre and Yolngu Action Group
37	Why Warriors Pty Ltd and the AHED Project
38	Kimberley Language Resource Centre
39	Ms Lisbeth Arctander
40	Inhaadi Adnyamathanha Ngawarla Class
41	Sisters of St Joseph South Australia Reconciliation Circle
42	Ms Kathy Smerdon, Pipalyatjara Anangu School
43	Ms Karli Jozeps and Ms Ursula Goetz, Pipalyatjara Anangu School
44	Research Centre for Languages and Cultures, University of South Australia
45	Ms Genevieve Campbell
46	Mr John Bradbury
47	Australian Federation of Graduate Women Inc
48	Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership
49	Papulu Apparr-kari Language Centre

50	Dr Jane Thorn
51	Ms Margaret Carew and Ms April Campbell
52	Dr Mary Laughren
53	Yipirinya School
54	The Indigenous Teachers of Shepherdson College
55	Dr Myfany Turpin
56	National Indigenous Radio Service
57	Ms Beth Graham, Ms Kathryn Gale and Prof Charles Grimes
58	Mr Mark Treloar
59	New South Wales Department of Education and Communities
60	Australian Society for Indigenous Languages
60a	Australian Society for Indigenous Languages Supplementary Submission
61	Ms Sophie Rudolph
62	Mr Trevor Stockley
63	Ms Nyoka Hatfield
64	Prof Francoise Dussart
65	Coordinating Support for Indigenous Scriptures
66	Mr David Thompson and Ms Clair Hill
67	Mr Alex Kelly
68	Indigenous Remote Communications Association
68a	Indigenous Remote Communications Association Supplementary Submission
69	Assoc Prof Tonya Stebbins
70	Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of Technology Sydney
71	Ms Klara Hansen
72	Australian Council of TESOL Associations
73	Board of Studies New South Wales
74	Aboriginal Resource and Development Services Inc
75	National Recording Project for Indigenous Performance in Australia
76	Prof Gillian Cowlishaw
77	Dr Pauline Bunce
78	Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre
79	Dr Caroline Jones
80	Ms Michele Rowe
81	Dr Brian Devlin

82   Queensland Indigenous Languages Advisory Committee

83   Assoc Prof Claire Bowern

84   Mr Richard Trudgen

85   Sunrise Alliance Inc

86   Diocese of Lismore, Catholic Education Office

87   Prof Michael Christie and Mr John Greatorex

88   Australian Education Union

89   Ms Alison Ngamperle Ross and Ms Carol Ngalyerre Thompson

90   Mobile Language Team, University of Adelaide

91   Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre

92   Kaurna Warra Pintyandi Group and Dr Rob Amery

93   Ms Margaret Dinham

94   The Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation

95   Ms Natalie O'Connor

96   Ms Ruth Lipscombe

97   Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and
          Culture (Corporation)

98   Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales and Department of Education and
          Communities New South Wales

98a   Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales and Department of Education and
          Communities New South Wales - Supplementary Submission

99   Dr Stephen Morey

100   Ms Claire Salter

101   Central Land Council

102   Voice for Justice

103   Ms Jane Simpson

104   Australian Linguistic Society

105   Ms Molly Townes O'Brien, Mr Peter Bailey and Ms Jo-Anne Weinman

106   Dr Nicholas Thieberger

107   Speech Pathology Australia

108   Mr Maratja Dhamarrandji and Mr Kendall Trudgen

109   Queensland Government - Department of Education and Training

109a   Queensland Government - Department of Education and Training
          Supplementary Submission

110   Languages Perspectives Group, Northern Indigenous School Support
          Unit, Queensland Department of Education

111   Ms Rosemary McKenry

112   National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

113   Dr Jennifer Green

114   New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc

115   Reconciliation Australia

116   Anangu Coordinators

117   Western Australia Department of Education Kimberley Education Region

118   Ms Brea Speechley

119   Dr Charmian Kenner

120   Ms Aileen Hawkes

121   Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc

122   Dr Judith Gould

123   Ms Annette Millar and Ms Joyce Hudson

124   Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council

125   Mr Greg Dickson

126   Dr Samantha Disbray

127   Office for the Arts Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

127a   Office for the Arts Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
        Supplementary Submission

128   Ms Denise Shillinglaw

129   The Aboriginal Languages of Western Australia Course Advisory
        Committee

130   Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity

131   Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

131a   Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
        Supplementary Submission

131b   Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
        Supplementary Submission

132   Dr Jack Frawley

133   Aboriginal and Islander Independent Community School Inc

134   Gidarjil Development Corporation

135   North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency

136   Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre Aboriginal Corporation

137   Mr Ron Coster

138   Northern Territory Government

139   National Congress of Australia's First People

139a   National Congress of Australia's First People
        Supplementary Submission

139b	National Congress of Australia's First People Supplementary Submission
140	National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd
140a	National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd Supplementary Submission
141	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
141a	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs Supplementary Submission
142	Dr John Rudder
143	The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.
144	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre
145	National Sorry Day Committee Inc.
146	Torres Strait Regional Authority
147	Nyamba Buru Yawuru Ltd
148	National Rural Health Alliance
149	Prof Ghil'ad Zuckermann
150	Madjulla Inc
151	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
152	Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages
153	Ms Denise Angelo
154	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

B

Appendix B – List of hearings and witnesses

Thursday, 7 July 2011 - Canberra

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

>Dr Doug Marmion, Manager, Language Unit and Language Programs Research Fellow

>Dr Kazuko Obato, Language Access Research Fellow

Thursday, 25 August 2011 - Canberra

Individuals

>Ms Stacey Campton

>Mr Ned David

Friday, 9 September 2011 - Newcastle

Individuals

>Ms Marianne Mckinnon-Kidd

Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council

>Mr Andrew Smith, Chief Executive Officer

Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre

>Mr Daryn McKenny, General Manager

Pambilang Cultural Initiatives

>Mr Ray Kelly, Snr, Board Member

>Mr Ray 'Bud' Kelly, Jnr

Thursday, 15 September 2011 - Canberra

Individuals

      Professor Lorna Williams

Thursday, 22 September 2011 - Canberra

Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation

      Mrs Mary-Ruth Mendel, Founder and Chair

Thursday, 6 October 2011 - Brisbane

Individuals

      Mrs Nyoka (Nicky) Hatfield

Aboriginal and Islander Independent Community School Inc

      Ms Philomena Downey, Principal

      Mr Victor Hart, Board Member

Eastern States Aboriginal Languages Group

      Mrs Faith Baisden, Coordinator

      Mrs Bridget Priman, Member

MRALC-Muurrbay, Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative

      Mr Gary Williams, Senior Language Researcher

Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre

      Ms Anna Ash, Coordinator-Linguist

National Indigenous Radio Service

      Mr Brett Leavy, General Manager

Queensland Government

      Mr Stephen Armitage, Executive Director, Indigenous Education and Training, Department of Education and Training

      Miss Claire Gorman, Principal Policy Officer, Department of Education and Training

Queensland Indigenous Languages Advisory Committee

      Mrs Faith Baisden, Secretary

      Mrs Bridget Priman, Member

Thursday, 13 October 2011 - Canberra

<u>University of Sydney</u>

> Mr John Hobson, Coordinator, Indigenous Languages Education, Koori Centre

Thursday, 3 November 2011 - Canberra

<u>Individuals</u>

> Dr William Fogarty
>
> Dr Inge Kral

Friday, 18 November 2011 - Sydney

<u>Australian Human Rights Commission</u>

> Ms Katie Kiss, Director, Social Justice Unit
>
> Ms Fabienne Balsamo, Senior Policy Officer

<u>Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales</u>

> Mr James Christian, Head
>
> Mr Shayne Williams, Residential Principal Policy Officer

<u>Australian Council TESOL Associations</u>

> Dr Robert Jackson, President

<u>Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation</u>

> Ms Jacqueline Phillips, National Director
>
> Mr Rajiv Viswanathan, Researcher

<u>Centre for Indigenous Technology Information and Engineering Solutions</u>

> Dr Cat Kutay, Public Officer
>
> Ms Kaye Mundine, Chairperson

<u>Department of Education and Communities</u>

> Ms Michele Hall, Director, Aboriginal Education and Training
>
> Mr Paul Callaghan, Director, New England Institute

<u>Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of Technology</u>

> Mr Paddy Gibson, Senior Researcher
>
> Ms Eva Cox, Research Fellow

<u>New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc</u>

> Ms Cindy Berwick, President

Mr Raymond Ingrey, Executive Officer

New South Wales Board of Studies

Mr Kevin Lowe, Inspector, Aboriginal Education

University of Sydney

Mr John Hobson, Coordinator, Indigenous Languages Education, Koori Centre

Thursday, 24 November 2011 - Canberra

Australian Education Union

Ms Darcel Russell, Deputy Federal Secretary

Thursday, 9 February 2012 - Canberra

Individual

Professor Jane Simpson

Thursday, 16 February 2012 - Canberra

Individual

Dr Nicholas Thieberger

Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity

Dr Margaret Florey, Senior Linguist

Thursday, 1 March 2012 - Canberra

Individual

Ms Denise Angelo

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Dr Russell Ayres, Branch Manager

Dr Amanda Day, Director, Languages and Asian Studies Section

Ms Jan Febey, Branch Manager, Quality Teaching Branch

Mr Stephen Goodwin, Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Schooling Branch

Mr Glen Hansen, Director, Education Policy, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Schooling Branch

Mr Tim Kinder, Director, Curriculum Assessment Section, National Curriculum Branch

Thursday, 15 March 2012 - Canberra

<u>Attorney-General's Department</u>

> Mr Kym Duggan, First Assistant Secretary, Social Inclusion Division

<u>Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs</u>

> Mr Richard Aspinall, State Manager, Western Australia State Office

> Ms Helen Board, Deputy State Manager, Northern Territory State Office

> Mr Andrew Davitt, Branch Manager, Commonwealth and State Relations

> Ms Cath Halbert, Group Manager, Indigenous Policy and Engagement Group

<u>Department of Human Services</u>

> Mr Sam Campisi, National Manager, Multicultural Services

<u>National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters</u>

> Mr John Beever, Chief Executive Officer

> Mr Robert Foote, Manager Accreditation

Thursday, 22 March 2012 - Canberra

<u>Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport</u>

> Mr Richard Eccles, Deputy Secretary, Arts and Sport Group

> Ms Sally Basser, First Assistant Secretary, Office for the Arts

> Ms Stacey Campton, Assistant Secretary, Indigenous Culture Branch, Office of the Arts

Monday, 2 April 2012 - Adelaide

<u>Individual</u>

> Prof Ghil'ad Zuckermann, Professor of Linguistics and Endangered Languages

<u>Inhaadi Adnyamathanha Ngawarla Language and Cultural Program</u>

> Ms Gillian Bovoro, Coordinator

> Ms Ema Bovoro

<u>Kaurna Warra Pintyandi</u>

> Dr Robert Amery, Convener

> Mr Vincent John Buckskin, Community Member

> Dr Alitya Rigney, Signatory

Pipalyatjara Anangu School

>Mrs Kathy Smerdon, Principal

>Ms Fayeanne Jones, Anangu Coordinator

>Ms Karli Jozeps, Language Course Coordinator

TAFE South Australia

>Mr Barry McDonald, Lecturer

>Ms Inawantji Scales, Lecturer

University of Adelaide

>Dr Mary-Anne Gale, Linguist, Mobile Language Team

>Ms Karina Lester, Aboriginal Language Worker, Mobile Language Team

>Mrs Verna Koolmatrie, Mobile Language Team

University of South Australia

>Dr Kathleen Heugh, Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics

>Prof Angela Scarino, Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics

Tuesday, 3 April 2012 - Utopia Homelands

Individuals

>Mr Sammy Club, Deputy Chair, Urapuntja Aboriginal Corporation

>Mr Richard Downs, Ampilatwatja community

>Ms Kerry Kasmira, Principal, Arlparra School

>Ms Ngarla Kunoth-Monks

>Ms Rosie Kunoth, Alyawarra elder

>Ms Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, Anmatjere elder

>Mr Harold Nelson, Anterrengeny elder and traditional owner

>Ms Kathleen Ngal, Anmatjere woman, Camel Camp

>Mr Banjo Petyarr, Ampilatwatja elder and traditional owner

>Ms Violet Petyarr, Mosquito Bore Community

>Ms Angela Purvis, Alyawarr Interpreter

>Ms Lena Pwerl, Urapuntja Aboriginal Corporation

>Ms Lena Skinner, Utopia Homelands

>Mr Michael Timewell, Teacher, Arlparra School

Wednesday, 4 April 2012 - Alice Springs

Individuals

  Mrs Wendy Baarda

  Mr Frank Baarda

  Ms April Campbell

  Ms Margaret Carew

  Mr Matthew Jampijinpa Egan

  Ms Janine Oldfield

  Mr Donovan Jampijinpa Rice

Alice Springs Language Centre

  Mrs Dominique Castle, Principal

  Miss Margaret Smith, Assistant Teacher

  Miss Tanya Zerk, Assistant Principal

Indigenous Community Television Ltd

  Ms Rita Cattoni, Manager

  Ms Louise Cavanagh, Director

  Mr Simon Japangardi Fisher, Board Member

Indigenous Remote Communications Association

  Mr Dennis Charles, Member

  Mr Daniel John Featherstone, Interim Manager

  Mr Noel Heenan, Chairperson

  Mrs Linda Florence Hughes, Communications Officer

  Mr Lionel James, Member

  Ms Elizabeth Napaljarri Katakarinja, Member

Institute for Aboriginal Development

  Ms Janice Harris, Director

  Ms Bonita Kopp, Director

  Ms Fiona Rose Stokes, Director, Management Committee

  Mrs Patricia Turner, Chairperson

  Mrs Margaret Kemarre Turner OAM, Elder, Central Arrernte

  Ms Amelia Turner, Apmereke-Artweye for Irlpme Estate, Central Arrernte

  Mr Peter Wallace, Kwertengerle for Antulye, Central Arrernte

Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation (the Language Centre)

> Ms Karan Haywood, Chief Executive Officer
>
> Mrs Sandra Morrison, Language Centre
>
> Mr Ronald Morrison, Chairperson
>
> Mrs Judy Nixon, Cultural Officer
>
> Ms Penelope Phillips, Aboriginal Liaison Officer
>
> Mr Ross Williams, Deputy Chairperson

Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc

> Mrs Enid Nangala Gallagher, Gallagher
>
> Ms Barbara Napanangka Martin, Chairperson
>
> Mr Hamilton Japaljarri Morris
>
> Mr Riley Jupurrurla Oldfield
>
> Mr Jacob Jungarrayi Spencer
>
> Ms Maisie Napurrurla Wayne

Yipirinya School Council

> Mr Lance Box, Curriculum Coordinator

Monday, 30 April 2012 - Broome

Individuals

> Ms Joyce Hudson
>
> Mrs Annette Millar

Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and Culture
Aboriginal Corporation

> Mrs Barbara McGillivray, Chair
>
> Mr James Akee, Shadow Delegate
>
> Mr John (Uncle Sandy) Atkinson, Vice President
>
> Mrs Dianne Baldock, Director
>
> Mr James Cripps, Director
>
> Mrs Doris Paton, Acting Treasurer

Kimberley Interpreting Service

> Ms Bella Hobbs, Interpreter
>
> Ms Annette Kogolo, Co-Chair
>
> Ms Dee Lightfoot, Coordinator
>
> Mr David Newry, Chair

Ms Kayn Poelina-Johnson, Administrator

Ms Wendy Rogers, Interpreter

Mr Thomas Saunders, Interpreter and Translator Support

Kimberley Language Resource Centre

Mr Anthony Watson, Director

Mabu Yawuru Ngan-ga

Ms Gina Albert

Ms Dianne Appleby

Ms Linda Dean

Ms Noreen Edgar

Ms Carmel Leahy

Ms Martha Lee

Mr Michael Mavromatis

Ms Coco Yu

Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre

Dr Knut Olawsky, Senior Linguist and Manager

Notre Dame University

Ms Anna Dwyer, Nulungu Research Institute

Ms Sue Thomas, Nulungu Research Institute

Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre

Ms Lorraine Injie, Vice-Chairperson

Western Australian Department of Education

Mrs Lola Jones, Aboriginal Languages Coordinator-Curriculum Officer, Kimberley Education Office

Tuesday, 1 May 2012 - Halls Creek

Individuals

Ms Tanba Banks

Ms Valma Banks

Mrs Bonnie Edwards

Ms Sandy Faber

Miss Ashlyn Keddie

Ms Carolyn McAdam

Mr Greg Tait

Halls Creek District High School

>   Mr Phil Collins, Associate Principal

Kimberley Interpreting Service

>   Mr Robert Nanaala, Interpreter

Kimberley Language Resource Centre

>   Ms June Oscar, Chairperson

>   Mr Henry Ah Choo

>   Ms Yvonne Birrell

>   Mrs Patsy Bedford, Training and Development Officer

>   Mr Stan Brumby

>   Mr Percy Bulagardie, Director

>   Ms May Butcher

>   Miss Siobhan Casson, Training and Development Manager

>   Mrs Josey Farrer, Director

>   Ms Jean Malay, Language Worker

>   Mrs Tiny McCale

>   Mr Stewart Morton, Director

>   Mrs Lulu Trancollino

Shire of Halls Creek

>   Ms Michelle Martin, Community Engagement Officer

Warlawurru Catholic School

>   Mr Dean Savoia, Principal

Wednesday, 2 May 2012 - Darwin

Individuals

>   Mr John Bradbury

>   Dr Brian Devlin

>   Professor Michael Christie

>   Dr Mary Laughren

>   Dr Marilyn McLellan, Linguist

>   Mr Trevor Stockley

>   Dr Jane Thorn

>   Mr Richard Trudgen

>   Mr Troy Wyles-Wheelan

Aboriginal Interpreter Service

 Mrs Colleen Rosas, Director

Aboriginal Resource and Development Service

 Mr Maratja Dhamarrandji, Chairperson

Australian Society for Indigenous Languages

 Ms Margaret Mickan, Board Chairperson

 Ms Mary Skidmore, Literacy and Training Consultant

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

 Ms Claire Kilgariff, Acting Director

 Dr Sue Stanton

Department of Education and Training, Northern Territory

 Ms Susan Bowden, Executive Director, Education Services

North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency

 Ms Dorothy Fox, Chairperson

 Mr Steve Barlow, Advocacy Manager

 Ms Priscilla Collins, Chief Executive Officer

Northern Territory Government

 Ms Malarndirri McCarthy, Minister for Indigenous Policy

 Mr Gary Barnes, Chief Executive, Department of Education and Training

 Mrs Karmi Sceney, Adviser to Chief Executive, Department of Education and Training

Northern Territory Library

 Ms Jo McGill, Director

Shepherdson College

 Ms Helen Nungalurr Bukulatjpi, Assistant Teacher

 Mr Jermaine Wulura Campbell, Tutor

 Ms Jean Yurranydjil Dhurrkay, Assistant Teacher

 Ms Valerie Bulkunu Garrawurra, Teacher

 Ms Daisy Gondarra, Cultural adviser

 Ms Daisy Wulumu Munyarryun, Language worker

 Ms Helen Rrikawuku Yunipinu, Interpreter and language worker

Sunrise Alliance

 Mr Kendall Trudgen, Coordinator

<u>Yirrkala School</u>

> Ms Banbapuy Ganambarr
>
> Ms Dhalulu Ganambarr-Stubbs
>
> Ms Dundiwuy Mununggurr

Thursday, 24 May 2012 - Canberra

<u>Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre Inc</u>

> Ms Alison Overeem, Director, Aboriginal Children's Centre
>
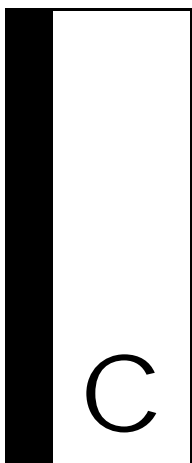> Ms Annie Reynolds, Coordinator, palawa kani Language Program

<u>Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages</u>

> Dr Christina Eira, Community Linguist
>
> Mr Paul Paton, Executive Officer

Thursday, 31 May 2012 - Canberra

<u>National Congress of Australia's First People</u>

> Ms Venessa Curnow, Director

C

Appendix C – List of exhibits

1 Australian Society for Indigenous Languages

Data on NT school attendance, and hints for cross-cultural communication in the Top End

2 Australian Society for Indigenous Languages

Information about Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education