



WARLPIRI PATU KURLANGU JARU
Submission to the House of Representatives
Sanding committee on Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Affairs National Inquiry into
Language Learning in Indigenous
Communities





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House of Representatives Standing Committee
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
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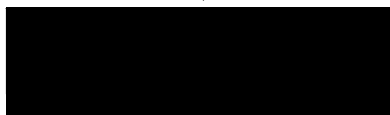
To the Secretary

Please find attached our submission to the National Inquiry into Language Learning in Indigenous communities. We have put a lot of thought into our submission and the comments on the Terms of Reference have come out of a series of workshops held in the Warlpiri communities of Willowra, Yuendumu and Nyirripi. These workshops were held because the issues that have been raised by this inquiry are very important to Warlpiri and we have been very outspoken about them in the past.

We hope that you read our submission and think about how the government might help us to keep our language strong in our communities and schools for the future benefit of all Warlpiri people.

We also ask you to give serious consideration to holding a public hearing in Alice Springs. We are keen to meet members of your committee face to face with other language groups from Central Australia who are also concerned about the future of their languages and the future wellbeing of their families and communities. We look forward to your reply.

Kind Regards



Barbara Martin
Chairperson
Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc

Background

Warlpiri country is located in the Tanami Desert northwest of Alice Springs. Warlpiri live mostly in the communities of Yuendumu, Lajamanu, Nyirripi and Willowra but many Warlpiri also live in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, and other communities in Central Australia. When government moved many Warlpiri off their traditional lands and into settlements, the communities of Lajamanu and Yuendumu were set up. Lajamanu is on Gurindji Land and Yuendumu is on the edge of Anmatyerre lands. Willowra people have always lived on their own land. With the outstation movement in the 1980s and 1990s many Warlpiri people moved out to small communities where they could be close to their own traditional land. . At this time small communities such as Nyirripi were set up.

Most of the Yapa (Warlpiri people) living in the four Warlpiri communities speak Warlpiri most of the time but also speak English while others speak Warlpiri and a form of Aboriginal English and others speak almost no English at all. Many of our people also speak other local Aboriginal languages including Luritja, Anmatjerre, Pitjantjatjara, Arrernte, Jaru, Warumungu as well as other nearby languages.

Yapa have a long history of involvement with bush schools - our elders pass on knowledge in the classroom and on bush trips and country visits, we are trained pre-school and school teachers and assistant teachers, school liaison officers and bus drivers. This involvement is strong because we care about our children's education and is also linked to our strong belief in the need for a bilingual or 'two-way' program approach to teaching our young children. We have seen with our own eyes the benefits of teaching young children to speak, sing, read and write in their mother tongue first before moving on to do the same in English. This belief is strongly supported by Australian and overseas research. As well as giving kids a strong foundation for learning it is also important for their spirit and identity, their sense of belonging and connectedness to family, country and community and their confidence as growing young people.

Despite these benefits the Northern Territory Government has not supported bilingual programs in a consistent way and past programs have suffered from a lack of support

and resources. Bilingual or 'two way' programs have now been taken away from all of our Warlpiri schools through the introduction of the 'Four Hours English' policy.

History of the Warlpiri Triangle and Warlpiri–patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc.

The strong involvement of Warlpiri people in the education system is very unique and has led to the establishment of the Warlpiri Triangle and the Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Association –an organisation open to all Warlpiri educators and Warlpiri interested in education and learning matters.

Warlpiri Triangle was set up in 1984 and grew out of kinship links between Yapa working in Warlpiri schools and professional links that began to develop between educators working in these schools. Annual Warlpiri Triangle workshops bring together Yapa educators and elders to focus on professional development and development of common teaching materials and curriculum. After the establishment of a bilingual program at Yuendumu school in 1974, these links were instrumental in bilingual programs being established in Willowra in 1976 and Lajamanu in 1982. Nyirrpi school was started by Yuendumu school in 1985.

Warlpiri Triangle workshops were less frequent when the bilingual program was stopped in the early 1990's but became more regular again with the re-introduction of the bilingual program in the late 1990's. In 2001 more than 90 elders and Warlpiri educators attended Warlpiri Triangle in Lajamanu and Warlpiri-patu-kurlangu Jaru Inc held its first AGM as an independent association of Warlpiri educators at that meeting. With the introduction of the 'Four hours English policy' the education department support for the future of Warlpiri Triangle is not clear.

In 2006 Jinta-Jarrimi workshops were started and have been held twice a year ever since. These workshops are also for professional development of Yapa teachers and the development of two-way learning curriculum. There is now no funding for travel to these workshops and no Regional linguist for resource development, program support, professional development inservices including Warlpiri Triangle and Jinta-jarrimi.

Despite the ups and downs of the government's support for bilingual programs in Warlpiri schools, Yapa teachers have continued to support Warlpiri Triangle and push for the re-introduction of properly resourced bilingual programs.

Executive Summary

Most of the issues raised by the National Inquiry into Indigenous Languages are very important to Warlpiri people. We have talked about these problems many times before and to government but it feels like no-one is listening (see attached reports). We all took part in the talks around the Remote Learning Partnership Agreement with the Education Department. It was going really well. We were happy with the final draft that said that Warlpiri and English should be equal as languages in our schools. Then the 'Four Hours English' policy was brought in and the draft changed. That statement about equality was taken out and we refused to sign the changed agreement.

Even though we have talked so much already we were still willing to meet again and talk about the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry. With the help of Central Land Council in their role as agents of the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust we held two workshops in Yuendumu, one in Nyirrpi and one in Willowra (the Lajamanu workshop was called off because of the death of a senior community member) to make sure each community had a chance to say something for this submission. We have a lot to say but the most important issues are:

1. Making Warlpiri and English languages equal in schools and all government services. This means giving Warlpiri equal time in the school time table and employing equal numbers of Warlpiri and English staff in all government organisations. As Lance Turner from Nyirrpi says, "Make sure you tell them to be equal with us because we are equal to them. The government wants us to learn Kardiya (non-Aboriginal) way but they don't learn Yapa way, 'two way' learning is about respect, we respect English, they have to respect our language, they say 'two way' but they don't learn two way they don't respect Yapa way. We all need to learn two way, Kardiya and Yapa because we are both equal."
2. Making sure Warlpiri children can keep learning to read and write in our own language. We are asking for the government to bring back a well-resourced bilingual program in Warlpiri Schools. We believe this is our right under Section 14 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. (See Appendix 1. P 27)

3. Bringing back a bilingual or 'two way' program for the early years because we know it will be a strong start for reading and writing in English. If they don't start in their mother language we know our kids will end up not being able to read or write properly in Warlpiri or English.

4. When English is spoken all the time to young children in school they cannot understand and find it very hard to be in school. They are too shy to ask questions of white teachers. They get really frustrated and start to act up and behave badly. They just stop coming to school. When Yapa teachers and Kardiya (non-Yapa) teachers are teaching together in a 'two way program' little kids enjoy school and feel more happier there-it makes sense to them and to their parents.

5. Supporting living languages like Warlpiri so that we do not need a program like in other parts of Australia to bring it back once it is nearly lost. We should learn from that hard lesson and not make the same mistake with living languages like Warlpiri.

6. 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.

Introduction by Harry Nelson, Community Elder Yuendumu

We have seen one of our communities which had many Warlpiri speakers 20 to 30 years ago, now nearly all parents and children no longer speak proper Warlpiri. They speak Aboriginal English which is not pronounced in the standard English way which is O.K. for talking among themselves but they are not counted as Warlpiri by other Warlpiri communities and are then left out of Warlpiri meetings and business. This community really wanted to have a bilingual program at the time we started in Yuendumu. They had some trained Warlpiri teachers but the white staff in the school at the time would not support it. They did keep language and culture programs going for a long time with no

support. Some of their Warlpiri teachers and Assistant teachers came to Warlpiri triangle meetings.

Of our remaining Warlpiri communities there is one where Warlpiri language is seriously endangered. Children and younger parents are talking a mixed language which is getting closer to English or Creole. Their bilingual program started about ten years after ours at Yuendumu and theirs was stopped for a long time and then started again for a little while before the 'Four Hours English policy' which ended all bilingual programs.

In the two small more remote Warlpiri communities (Willowra and Nyirripi) the Warlpiri language is still strong, spoken by parents and children all the time. There are not many white people living in these communities.

When linguist Carmel O'Shannessy did her study of children's language in four Warlpiri communities she said that at Lajamanu most young people speak Warlpiri mixed with English and Yuendumu is the next place where Warlpiri is endangered. All children in Yuendumu can speak Warlpiri to adults but often use English or mixed English as a children's language among themselves. They might grow out of this but while there is mostly English in school they probably find this easier. If they keep using mixed language when they grow up, their children will not hear proper Warlpiri. Yuendumu is not so isolated. People travel in and out of Alice Springs all the time and there are many white people here like Youth volunteers talking English to children. We need our bilingual program in school so our children value our language and use strong Warlpiri for learning and literacy in school.

The future of our language depends on having keeping Warlpiri strong in all our communities so that when our young people marry into another Warlpiri community as they often do, children will grow up hearing the two parents talking adult Warlpiri. When young people marry into a community where Warlpiri is gone, the grandparents are very sad that their grandchildren don't speak their language.

When people don't speak strong Warlpiri they can't;

- learn songs for ceremonies

- use proper respectful language
- identify across families the network of relatedness
- understand traditional ownership and responsibilities and entitlements
- can't participate in meetings that are all in Warlpiri
- don't have status for negotiating with other family groups or tribal groups
- can't understand elders properly
- can't do those jobs where they need Warlpiri like Art Centre documenting paintings or Warlpiri Media making Warlpiri programs
- tend to be left out of traditional activities

At present we have some children who go to school all the time speaking English most of the day and other children who rarely go to school and speak only Warlpiri so the other children have to speak Warlpiri to them. This is one thing keeping our children speaking strong Warlpiri to each other at the present time with the present school policy. We want our children to speak English and Warlpiri but not mixed language.

Feedback to Terms of Reference – Nyirrpi, Yuendumu and Willowra communities

The comments below came from workshops held in Yuendumu, Nyirrpi and Willowra to give each community a chance to say something about this Inquiry's terms of reference. The people who came to these workshops are listed in Appendix 1. The workshops were supported by CLC WETT Project Officers. The Nyirrpi workshop was delivered in Warlpiri and the feedback translated into English and the Yuendumu and Willowra workshops were delivered in a mix of Warlpiri and English.

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

Yuendumu

We are the first Australians. We speak our own language from the country where we are born. We are proud we still have our language and culture. It is Australia's heritage for all Australians to be proud of. We respect our language, Dreamings and country. It is important that white people who come here respect our right to speak our own language in our own community and pass it on to our children generation to generation into the future. Our mother's language which we grow up with in our own family is the language of our hearts.

We need our Warlpiri language for our Dreamings, land rights, Ceremonies, Law, cultural knowledge, sorry business, songs and stories and every day living together as Warlpiri people. We need it for young people to learn from old people.

Warlpiri is the main language of our community. Warlpiri is what we teach the little kids. It is the first language before kids can learn English – they need a strong first language before they can learn English.

We need it for talking amongst ourselves at home, at work, at meetings, and at every organization in this community.

We need our children to learn in Warlpiri at school so they can use their learning at home and grow up speaking strong Warlpiri. We need the government to provide support positions in the Education Department and in the school. We need a Department linguist, a coordinator for Indigenous bilingual and Indigenous language programs. We

need a mentor for Warlpiri teachers and Assistant teachers. We have had these positions in the past when our Two Way program was working well but they have been taken away.

We need the government to support Batchelor College to provide Remote Area Teacher Education in our communities as they used to do. When Batchelor College's funding was cut back, teacher training in remote communities was cut back. We need more Warlpiri teachers.

We have the right to teach our children in their own language. It says so in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples¹. We feel that this right has been taken away from us through the Northern Territory Government's 'four hours English policy' and the total removal of the bilingual (two-way) learning program.

The Commonwealth government is not doing anything here to support Warlpiri identity and culture. Mostly our organisations which do promote cultural activities like P.A.W media and Mount Theo diversion programs are struggling for funding. Our W.Y.N Health which was making bush medicines and had a Warlpiri committee has been taken over by NT Health department. (WYN Health was making bush medicines at Yuendumu).

Nyirрпи

We talk our Warlpiri language everywhere at Nyirрпи, at work, clinic, child care, school, office, learning centre. We don't always understand when white people only speak English, especially at Centrelink and at government meetings.

Warlpiri language is really special for us. We can't tell our dreamtime stories and teach about country in English. Jukurrpa (dreamtime stories) can only be taught in language, to teach our culture we need to speak language, for culture visit, ceremony, stories, without our language we can't teach our culture. We need to keep our language and our culture strong for the future and for our children.

¹ See Appendix 1-Extract from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Willowra

Warlpiri is our first language. It is important because it is our language, we are born with it and grow up with it from our parents and grand parents and great grandparents. Without language we lose our culture. If we don't support our language we will lose it like Lajamanu and Ali Curung.

Language is knowledge. Language goes with our land and our body it is how we learn and teach our culture. Language is connected to land and dreaming, culture. Songs, stories, connects us to our ancestors.

Language is in our hearts.

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

Yuendumu

Our Warlpiri language makes us feel proud and strong. Young ones who have lost their language feel lost with no culture. They feel like they don't belong anywhere. They don't have a strong culture and identity. In some places the language has become mixed up with English. Here in Yuendumu and some other Warlpiri communities, our children are still talking Warlpiri very well. It's important for them to keep on speaking their language strongly, knowing skin names and respect for the right people, knowing Warlalja (their own relations, dreaming and country) to keep our community strong and for their own culture and identity. Strong culture means strong families who can support health and education. With strong culture people look after each other. They work together to send children to school, take sick ones to the clinic and make them take their medicines.

Without Warlpiri language kids are bored at school and don't go. School needs to be more relevant to them. Language and culture can help with that in school. Help to develop strong identities.

More old people also need to come into schools to teach Jukurrpa. Kids need to know names of places and their stories. This helps them feel that they belong. An important part of this is for kids to visit Jukurrpa sites through school to learn about them (their own country). Government needs to support one-week Country visits – not just one day trips. Day trips organized by schools aren't long enough to teach the children. Kids should be taking back what they learned into the classroom. Then they will be interested.

When kids visit their country and speak in their own language they feel safe and belong. They are proud. It helps them to be strong in their spirit and strong in their life. If this happens they are better placed to learn how to live in two worlds; they will be more interested in learning and participating. It is important for them to grow up and be knowledgeable and able to pass that knowledge on. That's a two-way thing.

The intervention doesn't use Warlpiri much. At meetings they sometimes had interpreters but the white people didn't take any notice of what the Warlpiri people said. They have employed one Warlpiri person as an engagement officer at Yuendumu but his job is mostly one way, to tell Warlpiri people what the white people want. There seems to be no place for Warlpiri in their plans. To really close the gaps in education and employment they should put Warlpiri language and culture first to make a strong Warlpiri community instead of breaking it down.

Nyirрпи

We still have our language and culture and Jukurrpa and our strong family and kinship ties- also kirda and kurdungurlu- for land ownership and sacred sites for men and women. Nyirрпи people have a strong identity. We need to keep this for our children and our future. We keep our young people safe and healthy in community, they don't go into town and get into trouble, to keep our children strong and in community they need to know about their culture and language. Otherwise they don't know who they are and they go into town and get into trouble with drugs and grog, they fight and they go to jail.

Willowra

When people have language they feel strong - their spirit is strong and they have a strong identity, they don't get sick easily and family takes care of each other.

Strong language equals strong identity, sense of place, community and culture. People need their language to learn their culture and learn about their culture and country and learn ceremonies. Everything is connected together, language is a part of that.

People who lose their language and culture are weak and lost, they can't go back once it is lost. When people feel lost they drink a lot and don't come back to their communities or join in ceremony.

Kids can go away to boarding school but they still know their identity, they can still come back because they are still strong. People need language to learn culture, to learn about the country and Jukurrpa and ceremony they need to know the language, learning ceremony helps people feel and stay strong.

When people are lost they go into town and they get into town and into trouble, drinking and everything. Without language everything is lost. Without language they forget about things, they forget who they are and forget what is important. Their children don't learn language or culture.

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

Yuendumu

It's important to talk to little children in their first language so they can understand and learn and get the meaning. When they have English most of the time in school they don't listen all the time. Sometimes they get silly with English teachers. When kids start reading or singing in Warlpiri during the four hours 'English time' they are made to stop. The kids get frustrated and act up. When kids can't understand what is happening they are too shy to ask White teachers and then they behave badly.

When they were learning only English songs the parents were asking, "Why are they only singing English songs?"

It's easy for little children to listen to a Warlpiri teacher. They can understand. They can ask for help. The Warlpiri teacher is known to them. It's also important they learn to read in Warlpiri so they get the meaning and so they can write their own stories. We need a home reading program with books to take home to read with family. Then they can see reading as a part of their life not just something they do in school.

It is also true that parents get more involved when their kids are learning in Warlpiri and doing things in school that they understand and can talk about when they come home. It is more real and interesting for them.

Kids who went through bilingual schooling learnt to read and write in Warlpiri and English. When they don't learn to write and read in their own language it will be lost. Kids speak Warlpiri at home but they need to learn to read and write Warlpiri at school. Without that their minds aren't ready to learn English.

Warlpiri Teachers and Assistant Teachers already speak, write and read Warlpiri. There is no need to start all over again. That important resource is already there but is being wasted under 'Four Hours English'.

Nyirrpi

Our little children only understand Warlpiri, they speak Warlpiri at home, child care, preschool and junior class. A strong first language means they can then learn English easily as they grow and go to bigger class. Little children are happier at preschool, playgroup and school if they understand the language, they are not scared, they feel safe and comfortable and they are happy to go to playgroup and school. The mothers go to crèche when they understand the language, if crèche is in English then the mothers are too shamed to go because they don't understand.

English is too hard for the little kids, they need to learn to go to school, learn to read and write and then they can learn English. Learning and speaking and reading and writing in Warlpiri first is the key to learning English.

If the teachers speak and understand Warlpiri then they can talk to the community and talk to the family about sending the kids to school. If they talk in English no one understands them and won't listen to them. Sometimes new strict teachers don't understand our culture, they make little kids scared.

All these things that we wanted were in that remote learning partnership before it was changed. We spent so much time working towards that and it was good and then the government just changed it all.

Willowra

My three children all started learning in Warlpiri then went to white schools, they still talk in Warlpiri (Julie Kitson). Little children speak Warlpiri even to their Kardiya teachers. Little kids feel comfortable speaking Warlpiri, not until year one or year two do they start to speak English.

Its different because of four hours English, we don't have much time, only 45 minutes for Warlpiri- it takes us days to finish one lesson, they can only do a little bit each day, it's not enough.

'Four hours English' makes Warlpiri not equal with English, 'two way' is about being equal, Warlpiri and English should be equal

It's good for the little kids to learn in Warlpiri, they learn well, they get used to school with Warlpiri and feel happy at school because it is safe and they feel safe. When little kids are being taught English by a Kardiya teacher they are scared, they don't understand and then they are scared of school and they don't want to go to school.

This is a Warlpiri community, even when kids come from other places with other languages they speak Warlpiri. Because Willowra is a little school and we have lots of Yapa teachers, the little kids can learn in Warlpiri. We are Warlpiri so we teach in Warlpiri. We do this even with the 'Four hours English' policy because we are strong and make it happen. When elders come into school they teach in Warlpiri.

If kids have strong Warlpiri then they can go away to boarding school and learn in English and they are ok because they have strong Warlpiri. Then they will come back, the young men will come back and join in the community.

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

Yuendumu

It's hard to make children keep going to school when it's nearly all English. They get tired of English all day. We need more Warlpiri teachers. If children learn in Warlpiri first they can move on to English easily. When it's hard they give up and drop out of school and get into trouble. Getting kids to school is the first step but then we have to keep them interested. This is hard for the little kids if they can't understand what the teacher is saying to them. We need more Warlpiri language culture in school. We need country visits, taking children out to their own country and Jukurrpa (dreaming places) for one week with elders. Warlpiri is the main language for teaching culture. It should be happening like it used to be before, with Warlpiri and English from preschool right through to older students. Then they would be happy to stay in school and do well in their classes.

There is a very strong need to have Warlpiri language based programs to keep kids interested in School. What works in other places? Can we make it work well in our Warlpiri schools too?

Parents need help to get kids to school. Schools have to have Yapa in that school liaison role -home liaison. This job went away and now it is only a part time kardiya job. Also they need to look into working with local community Police again to get kids going to School.

It is degrading when government spends money on Kardiya (non-aboriginal) teachers from somewhere else and don't bother with teachers already here in the community who are trained and able to teach. With 'Four Hours English' there is not a strong teaching job for Warlpiri teachers to do even though they have worked in the school for many years and have more experience than the white teachers who don't stay long. This is not good for children to see. Those Warlpiri teachers are their role models.

Nyirрпи

Nyirрпи school has never had support for bilingual or Warlpiri program. No teacher linguist, no literacy worker. We want to see young people growing up to be teachers, interpreters, Assistant Teachers so that they can teach language in school. But our young people don't get through school because school means nothing to them.

All the Warlpiri stories in the books come from other communities. We have lots of dreamings and stories in our country in Nyirрпи. None are written down. The young people don't know them. If the school had Warlpiri or bilingual and country visits and culture in the school then kids go to school, even the older ones, teenagers. When we were an outstation school, we went to our dreaming places and all the kids would go. If it is their own Yapa ways in school then kids go to school but when it is Kardiya way then kids don't go to school because school means nothing. Country visits and bush trips, kids go because they want to learn.

There are not many old people who know the stories and the Jukurrpa left to teach. We have only two old men left and a few old ladies. Soon they will all be gone and there won't be anyone to teach the Jukurrpa and the ceremonies. Our stories might be lost and our language and culture lost with them.

Willowra

Elder involvement in schools is important- they have cultural knowledge, history and strong language. They can help kids stay interested in school. Elders have that strong knowledge, we need them to come to school and teach the kids, they can only teach the kids in Warlpiri.

English makes the kids tired, kids can't concentrate in English all day because they don't always understand, it is boring for the kids when they have to learn in English all day. It is hard for kids to learn new things that they don't understand and new ideas when they don't understand the language, for hard things like maths it is too hard if kids are learning in English, they can work better if they learn in Warlpiri.

When kids don't understand the English they feel bad and then they act silly and play up in class. When class is in Warlpiri they understand and can learn so they feel good about themselves and they enjoy school.

Warlpiri teachers are good role models for kids- they can grow up and be a Warlpiri teacher but they can't grow up to be a white teacher. When kids don't have Warlpiri teachers as role models they don't imagine growing up to be a teacher because they think all teachers are white.

Teachers are good people for the kids to learn from- they don't go to town and drink and get into trouble.

Family members are more interested in the school when it is in Warlpiri and they can understand it, it makes the parents really proud for the kids to learn in Warlpiri. Family does not support the school so much when the school is only English.

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

Yuendumu

Everyone wants kids to learn English, there is no argument with that. We want our kids to learn to read and write in Warlpiri first, then English. This is the best way. They have shown that here and overseas.

In education and in jobs White people and Warlpiri people need to work together. This is the best way to get things done in a community.

Everyone needs English to understand Centrelink, courts, licenses, ITEC, bank, technology, TV programs, for visiting Alice Springs, for travel, for different jobs, for talking to bosses and white people at work and around the community. For study and some jobs you need to read and write English. In our community, for most jobs you need English and Warlpiri , for example in Child Care, clinic, Night Patrol and every work place because the people who go there are mostly Warlpiri.

White people coming in should respect our Warlpiri language and Law, and not think everything has to be in English or just disregard everything which is Warlpiri.

There must be a long commitment from government to two-way (bilingual) education. Not changing the policy all the time. Without a long-term commitment it all breaks down and we give up.

We should all get together as a team/community/School to develop a strategy to fix attendance problems. We believe that Warlpiri language and culture has to be a big part of the solution.

Nyirrpi

English is good for going away to study or for talking to Kardiya, for learning jobs, for interpreting for Centrelink and talking to the government, for talking to the police and for understanding the police. We need English to stand up for our rights to police and to government

Willowra

It is good for kids to learn both ways, both languages, not just one way English, both ways English and Warlpiri. Kids have to read and write for jobs, English is good for speaking to Kardiya, they can be interpreters.

Batchelor and boarding school is in English so for study English is good.

English literacy helps you get a job

6. Measures to improve Indigenous language interpreting and translating services

Yuendumu

There needs to be more interpreter training.

Because we had bilingual education all the people doing interpreter training could read and write in both languages. This does help a lot with doing the course and doing the

job. It is still a hard job interpreting for government agencies because Warlpiri and English are very different and you can't just translate word for word. It would help a lot if they would use more straight forward English for court, police matters Centrelink, health, ITEC, media and other official things. If we can understand the English we can always find a way to explain in Warlpiri. ITEC and Centrelink should use interpreters to talk to people, not just send letters or put English notices that people can't understand. Many people have been cut off their benefits because they don't understand.

Sometimes people feel uncomfortable interpreting in Court etc. as they feel like the families will blame them. Interpreters need help with how to deal with those situations. Also they should use the family more to interpret for young people and old people

Nyirрпи

We need interpreter training here in our learning centre. It's hard going to Yuendumu- there's no accommodation. Nyirрпи needs its own interpreters from Nyirрпи. Some interpreters from other places speak different Warlpiri. We have some Nyirрпи people do interpreting for shire meetings and Centrelink but not many are trained. Not many people use interpreters, Shire and Centrelink only sometimes. Everyone should use interpreters, we don't always understand what is going on at a meeting.

Sometimes for court we can't get interpreters we need more Warlpiri and Nyirрпи trained interpreters.

Willowra

Interpreter training in communities is important, people get in trouble in town, there is no interpreter training here in Willowra.

Sometimes when people use an interpreter, they don't do it very well, they speak English for a long long time without giving the interpreter a chance to translate. People who have meetings and use interpreters need training to learn how to use interpreters well.

Julie Kitson "Sometimes I have to explain things in Warlpiri to people when they are talking to Centrelink and they don't understand, I have to interpret things. Centrelink need to use interpreters, I am not trained as an interpreter.

We still use our language in the workplace.

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

Yuendumu

We have a strong language here but it is not supported in the schools. It seems silly to worry only about languages that are nearly gone but not support languages that are still strong. One day we might end up with one of these programs because our Warlpiri language is lost too.

We had a very good Warlpiri maintenance program before when we had Two Way education. It should be as it was before. It was going well. Now there is just a little Warlpiri time, pushed off to the side, not part of the main school job of teaching literacy and maths and everything. It is not seen as important so other things often take over even the little time left. There seems to be a lot of talk in the education about valuing Indigenous languages but no will to support language programs. Support staff have been taken away.

So now we don't have a program, no bilingual, no language, no teacher linguists, no recording of stories, not much chance for old people to come to teach stories and history. No culture days, no excursions, no country visits, we used to have these things before 'four hours English policy'. Nothing only 'Four Hours English' at school.

We go to Warlpiri Triangle and Jinta Jarrimi and we talk about our language program, teacher linguists, bilingual, culture nights, bush trips, old people in the school. But there is no program, we just have to teach 'Four Hours English'.

The kids don't learn proper Warlpiri, they don't know the names of all the birds and the trees and the Jukurrpa. They mix English and Warlpiri and they don't know either. We are losing Warlpiri.

Nyirрпи

The government has not supported us when we asked to get our 'Two Way' program back in the school. They have not supported teacher training for our local indigenous teachers. They have made Batchelor College run their accredited courses from other states which are not suited to needs of remote schools, so that most of the tertiary students at Batchelor come from other states. There is already a university in Darwin running those mainstream courses. Batchelor was originally set up to train Indigenous people to work in their communities. The main thing we need for language maintenance here is more Warlpiri teachers and a policy which allows them to be the teachers.

Willowra

Programs are not working well because many places with strong language, their language is getting weaker and weaker. Places like Ali Curung are still losing language, the government ignores these places until it is too late and the language is gone.

Old people are passing away and language goes with them- some places only have a few old people left.

Lajamanu is losing their language- the kids speak English and Warlpiri together, Creole. The kids are still not allowed to speak Warlpiri in school. Everybody is picking up mixed language, not just the kids. When the kids from Lajamanu and Ali Curung who speak mixed language come to Willowra the Willowra kids with good Warlpiri copy them, we don't want to spoil our language, we don't want to be like that in Willowra. Kids in Yuendumu borrow words from English even when there is a good Warlpiri word- that doesn't happen in Willowra, we don't want that to happen here.

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

Yuendumu

We don't know much about the Commonwealth Indigenous Language policy but would like to know more. We would also like to know how that policy can have an effect on what happens to our Warlpiri language in our communities and schools here in the Northern Territory.

Northern Territory Government's 'Four Hours English' Policy:

The Northern Territory Government's 'Four Hours English' policy pushes our first language down. When Warlpiri kids are told to stop reading a Warlpiri book or stop singing in Warlpiri by teachers during the 'Four hours English time it makes them feel sad and shamed and they act up. It makes them think their own language is not as important as English.

When the Northern Territory Government held a Bush Cabinet in Yuendumu not long after the 'Four Hours English' policy was brought in we were very strong in speaking about our concerns and the importance of bilingual education in the early years. At the time The NT Education Minister Chris Burns promised us that we could have bilingual back up to Year 2. Nothing has happened about that promise. There is Warlpiri time in class but kids are still learning to read in English from Grade 1. Kids are meant to get one hour Warlpiri but it doesn't happen every day. English and Warlpiri should have equal status in the School. How can we make them stick to that promise? If it is to work well it needs to be properly supported.

Bush Schools do not offer what mainstream schools do especially for secondary age students. There is a lot missing. The School Council needs to be supported and listened to. It's a way to connect the School to the Community. In some Warlpiri communities there is not really a school council. School councils need to be stronger –they are a way to involve parents and the community in the school.

Nyirrpi

Are they supporting indigenous languages in schools?

We don't see any support-not really anything. We don't have a Warlpiri class at the school. We need a literacy centre at the school, a Warlpiri Literacy Centre with its own camera, video, computer and literacy workers and a teacher linguist. Some places like Lajamanu they don't even let the teachers go to Warlpiri Triangle or Jinta Jarrimi, its ok here because we have Wendy and now Anne (Principal and Acting Principal). The school doesn't support Warlpiri, they want everything to be in English.

Endangered languages

Warlpiri is not endangered, we are lucky, we still have our language and our culture, not like in New South Wales- when we go to the language conference we hear about those other languages that people don't speak any more. We want to keep our language forever, we can still lose our stories and history from our old people.

Working with languages to close the gap

We don't know about this 'Close the gap', we just know about the intervention.

When they use Warlpiri language interpreters it does close the gap, it helps people to understand what the government is talking about. For Warlpiri people the only problem is grog and drugs- that is the only gap between Yapa and Kardiya, if they close the bottleshops they will close the gap "tell them to close the bottleshops".

Critically endangered languages.

We read in the paper and letters from Julia Gillard that a lot of money has been put into saving and reviving some languages. We don't know anything about these programs. We feel that some of the funding and support should go towards our Indigenous languages in the Centre where they are still spoken today but they could start breaking down if we don't put the effort into keeping them strong. We have seen this happen in other communities.

Willowra

We don't know about the Commonwealth Indigenous Language policy- we don't know what that one is.

Languages are going, Warumungu, Gurindgi, these languages are almost gone. Languages are getting weaker or have been lost even in this lifetime. These programs in N.S.W. don't come here, we don't know about any of them.

Northern Territory Government's 'Four Hours English' Policy:

We should change that four hours policy. We want bilingual where we are equal, both languages equal, Warlpiri and English. The education policy turned everything upside down, all of the good things got lost and now we just have the English.

We have no school council meetings anymore, no planning for school, no planning with elders for country visit or language and culture program. We used to have Language and Linguistics courses at Batchelor with C.A.L.L and then S.A.L. to run courses in the communities but no more.

More Willowra kids are going away to boarding school- to Yirara. Four went but two came back, some are going to St Johns in Darwin.

Some Actions Identified by Yuendumu Community

The protection of Warlpiri language can only be guaranteed if bilingual or Warlpiri language competency should be formally recognized as a qualification for working in Warlpiri Schools. No matter how good the teacher, if they do not speak the language, no quality learning will happen. E.g. Japanese teacher teaching English students.

Government policies need to stop changing. People get sick of being consulted and nothing changing for the positive.

It needs to be recognized that the Northern Territory governments 'Four hour English' goes against the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people (endorsed by Australia in April 2009) particularly Article 14.1 and 14.3 *.

Yapa teachers need mentors to support them with programming, preparation, organizing excursions, helping with designing and organizing learning materials for Warlpiri teaching of the curriculum.

Need to pay for old people more to work in the School.

Need to read what Yapa have already told them.

We need access to successful programs like Clontarf.

Need full time liaison officer to make sure kids get to school. Holistic support system around getting kids back to school

Visiting linguists from DET have gone and need to come back.

NT Minister of Education promised that bilingual education could come back in years one and two in Yuendumu.

Need more Yapa teachers in training. The old teachers who came through bilingual system should train them and bring them through the system.

Indigenous teachers need equal representation when selecting staff at the School e.g. Principals.

Warlpiri teachers need the same conditions as Kardiya teachers – housing, maintenance, incentives etc.

Appendix 1

*** United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

Article 14

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

Appendix 2

Warlpiri Workshop Participants

Yuendumu (workshop 1)

Nancy Oldfield	Tess Ross
Shirley Martin	Peggy Brown
Maisie Wayne	Wendy Simms
Enid Gallagher	Alma Granites

Yuendumu (workshop 2) 22.08.11

Ned Hargraves	Peggy Brown
Robin Granites	Ormay Gallagher
Barbara Martin	Valerie Martin
Nancy Oldfield	Wendy Brown
Lilly Brown	

Nyirrpi

Fiona Gibson	Theo Butcher
Desmond Williams	Caroline Gibson
Lance Turner	Maudie Morris
Leston Spencer	Hilda Rogers
Pauline Gallagher	Joy Brown
Nancy Dickson	Topsy Fisher

Margaret Brown

Phyllis Williams

Molly Martin

Willowra 23.08.11

Maisie Kitson

Carol Kitson

Audrey Kitson

Helen Morton

Julie Kitson

Jeannie Presley

Leah Martin

Nupurrurla Khalia

Lucy Martin

Janelle Kitson (later on)

Kathy Nangala

Lajamanu

A meeting was scheduled for Lajamanu however a prominent community member passed away that day. Community elder and educator Jerry Jangala advised the WETT project officer that Lajamanu community's views on the importance of language are already written down in meeting minutes from Warlpiri Triangle. Some of those reports have been attached to this submission.