ATTACHMENT 1

Indigenous Languages Activities and Policy in Other States and Overseas

Victoria

Victoria has moved towards developing an Aboriginal Language Policy. In March 2007 the Victorian Government provided $10,000 towards the cost of commencing the development of such a policy through a two day workshop run by the Victorian Aboriginal Corporations for Languages (VACL) and FATSIL. FATSIL also contributed $34,000 towards the project. The workshop also included members of the Aboriginal community and the New Zealand Maori Language Commission. The policy will aim to revitalise Victoria’s traditional languages, seeing this as a significant aspect of preserving Indigenous culture. The chairman of VACL, John Atkinson is reported as saying that the policy would aim to make Indigenous language education more accessible to the Aboriginal community. He also said “Language contributes to the well-being of Aboriginal communities, strengthens ties between elders and young people and improves education in general for Indigenous people of all ages.” (Media Release, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Victoria, 22 March 2007) The draft language policy is not yet available.

South Australia

South Australia has no overall state language policy for Indigenous languages but has strong programs for Aboriginal languages in schools. South Australia was responsible for the development of the Australian Indigenous Languages Framework, a national initiative in the early 1990s to introduce Indigenous languages into senior secondary education, taken up in a range of other states. South Australia’s Languages Statement 2007–2011 states that “The maintenance and development of first, second and subsequent languages is vital” and goes on to endorse the learning of a range of languages including Australian Indigenous languages (Department of Education and Children’s Services, 2007 p. 8). Interpreting services in four Aboriginal languages are offered by the interpreting and Translating Centre of the South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission (http://www.translate.sa.gov.au). In 2002 a needs-based review of the status of Indigenous languages in South Australia was carried out by AIATSIS for ATSIC South Australia. Priorities recommended were

- Language maintenance of endangered languages
- Language revival
- Literacy [in the Indigenous languages] for strong languages
- Interpreting for strong languages (McConvell et al., 2002 pp. 12–13)

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory was the site of a major program of bilingual education programs in Aboriginal community schools from 1973, when these were set in place by the Commonwealth Government, which had jurisdiction at that time. These programs were taken over by the Northern Territory Government in 1979. The range of schools and languages represented expanded and even included Kriol bilingual education programs. Funding for these programs was moved in 1998 to support English teaching in these schools but in 2005 the Northern Territory Government moved to reinstate bilingual education, because it recognised that bilingual education was more effective than monolingual education in a second language for students whose first language was not English.

In fact the Collins review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory had shown in 1999 that evaluation data on outcomes in English in bilingual schools 'clearly shows positive outcomes compared with benchmark non-bilingual schools' (Collins, 1999 p. 122). Devlin (2007 pp. 20–26) summarises the limited available research evidence on bilingual education programs in Northern Territory Aboriginal community schools This also tends to support the relative success of these programs. The rest of his paper also summarises some relevant international research, which further supports the value of having students commence their formal education through the medium of their
first language. Further significant benefits of the bilingual programs in Aboriginal community schools included the training and employment of a wider range of Aboriginal people in the programs and the establishment of closer links between the school and the community (McKay, 1996 p. 115). The Northern Territory’s Indigenous Education Strategy sets Indigenous Language and Culture Programs (including the teaching of Indigenous languages) as Priority 3 (with [English] literacy and numeracy at Priority 1. (Department of Employment Education and Training, nd pp. 24, 26)

The Northern Territory Department of Local Government, Housing and Sport operates the Aboriginal Interpreter Service in Darwin and Alice Springs and in working closely with language centres in Tennant Creek and Katherine. This service is funded jointly by the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments. Its budget in 2005–2006 was $1.1 million. Additional interpreting services are provided by various language centres and by the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs (Kimberley Interpreting Service, 2004 pp. 11–12).

New South Wales
New South Wales is the only state to date which has developed an Aboriginal languages policy. It adopted its Aboriginal Languages Policy in 2004 following a two year process of consultation on a draft policy. The policy is supported by the Department of Education and Training’s Aboriginal Education Policy and by the Office of the Board of Studies’ K–10 Aboriginal Language Syllabus The policy itself indicates that it does not include a commitment to additional resources but it does commit all state government agencies to making progress towards the goals of the policy, while identifying four agencies as holding primary responsibility:

- NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- NSW Office of the Board of Studies
- NSW Department of Education and Training
- NSW Department of Corrective Services.

The policy had four focus areas

- Language programs in Aboriginal communities
- Language programs in the educational system
- Language programs in gaols and detention centres
- Aboriginal languages in the broader community

The policy was strongly oriented to making language programs more available to Aboriginal people, to ensuring that what was done was under the control of the relevant traditional owners, and to ensuring that the broader NSW population would achieve greater understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal languages as part of Aboriginal culture and the Australian heritage.

Specific goals of the policy in each focus area are as follows:

- Language programs in Aboriginal communities
  *That Aboriginal communities wishing to implement local language revitalization programs be supported to do so.*

- Language programs in the educational system
  *That Aboriginal students in NSW have an increased opportunity to learn their Aboriginal language of origin or another language, as determined by the local Aboriginal community.*

- Language programs in gaols and detention centres
  *That Aboriginal people, including Aboriginal youths, in gaols and detention centres have an increased opportunity to learn their Aboriginal language of origin or another language as determined by the local Aboriginal community.*

- Aboriginal languages in the broader community
  *That the NSW population have an understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal languages as an integral part of Aboriginal Culture and the Australian heritage.*
For policy objectives under each goal see the policy itself in Appendix 2 (NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 2004 pp. 7–9)

Given that, according to Table 1 above, less than 1% of Indigenous people in New South Wales spoke an Indigenous language at home in 1996, it can be expected that the focus of an Aboriginal Languages policy in New South Wales will have to be more oriented towards Language Renewal, Language Reclamation and Language Awareness than towards Language Maintenance or Revitalization. The New South Wales Aboriginal Languages Policy is exclusively focused on traditional Aboriginal languages and does not cover issues of day to day communication with Aboriginal people, including Aboriginal English.

One of the first achievements under the policy was the establishment of the NSW Aboriginal Languages Research and Resource Centre (opened 2003), costing $1.019 million, to help preserve the state’s 70 Aboriginal languages by giving technical support to Aboriginal communities in reviving, maintaining and teaching languages (http://www.daa.gov.au/policies/langpolicy.html accessed 24/10/2005).

**New Zealand**

New Zealand’s indigenous language Maori is an official language of New Zealand with its status protected under the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) and further recognized under the Maori Language Act of 1987. Maori is currently spoken by about 25% of the Maori population (Te Puni Kokiri & Te Taura Whiri i Te Reo Maori, 2003 p. 15). Maori is widely taught at all levels of education and Maori revitalization efforts have been famous for the establishment of Kohanga Reo/Language Nests, which are early childhood language immersion activities, where very young children are cared for by people of the grandparents’ generation who constantly speak Maori to them and with them. Broadcasting has been carried out in Maori since the 1980s. The Maori Language Act also established the Maori Language Commission to support the maintenance of Maori (cf. Spence, 2004 p. 395).

The most significant development over recent years is the adoption of *Te Rautaki Reo Maori/The Maori Language Strategy* in 2003 (Te Puni Kokiri & Te Taura Whiri i Te Reo Maori, 2003). This document summarises its vision as follows:

A twenty-five year vision has been developed as it reflects a generation of change. Over the last twenty-five years, the emphasis has been on Maori language teaching and learning and rebuilding a critical mass of speakers, particularly through formal education.

While this work must continue, this strategy sets out to move the Maori language to the next stage in revitalization over the next twenty-five years, by focusing on greater Maori language use in communities. This work is especially important in the whanau ["extended family"] environment. By normalizing the use of Maori language in whanau settings, language acquisition by future generations will become an accepted feature of everyday life and this will see the language flourish. (Te Puni Kokiri & Te Taura Whiri i Te Reo Maori, 2003 p. 5)

The five Goals set out in the *Maori Language Strategy* are

- Strengthening language skills
- Strengthening education opportunities in the Maori language
- Strengthening community leadership for the Maori language
- Strengthening recognition of the Maori language (Te Puni Kokiri & Te Taura Whiri i Te Reo Maori, 2003 p. 7)
The Maori Language Strategy emphasizes the role of Maori people in using, developing and leading revitalization of their language, including maintaining the separate dialects. At the same time the Strategy sets out the Government’s role in supporting and funding the appropriate education, broadcasting and language arts programs, language services (such as lexical development, certification of interpreters and translators), language archiving, language planning, policy and monitoring and the availability of public services in Maori across government departments. It emphasizes the importance of planning at local community level as the foundation of Maori language revitalization. (Te Puni Kokiri & Te Tauna Whiri i Te Reo Maori, 2003 p. 29, 31, 33, 35).

The Maori Language Survey, conducted in 2006 as part of the monitoring process for the Maori Language Strategy, measured language proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, as well as method of acquisition. They also measured how often people use the language, where they use the language, and with whom they use the language. 2006 survey results, compared with 2001 show an overall increase in use of Maori and particularly an increase in use by younger speakers (Te Puni Kokiri, 2007).

Canada
In Canada’s three provinces indigenous language are recognized as official in addition to the national official languages, English and French. Furthermore McKay reported (McKay, 1996 p. 179) that in the Yukon in the 1990s the Aboriginal Languages Services Branch was strategically placed within the Executive Council Office, thus providing a high priority for aboriginal languages and the ability to influence other government departments while retaining its autonomy.

The Northwest Territories in Canada recognizes eleven Official languages under the Official Languages Act. These include English and French (the only official languages of the whole of Canada) plus nine indigenous languages. Under the Official Languages Act are included the following provisions, among others:

- Any Official Language can be used in the Legislative Assembly.
- Acts and records of the Legislative Assembly must be published in English and French, and the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories can order translations in other languages.
- Any Official Language can be used by any person in proceedings in a court established by the Legislative Assembly (i.e. Territorial Court or Justice of the Peace Court).
- Interpretation services can be made available to the public in certain circumstances.
- Orders and judgements of a court are available in various Official Languages in certain circumstances.
- The public has the right to communicate and receive services from any regional, area or community office of the government in any Official Language spoken in the area, other than English and French, where:
  - There is a significant demand in that office for service in that language (i.e. many requests for services in Dogrib in a Dogrib language area)
  - Due to the nature of the office, it is reasonable to provide service in that language (i.e. a health board dealing with an ill patient who speaks Dogrib) (http://www.gov.nt.ca/langcom/english/general-information/what-is-official-lang-act.html)
The Government of Nunavut’s Minister of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth introduced legislation into the Nunavut Legislative Assembly in June 2007 to support the Inuit language. This legislation comprised the Official Languages Act and the Inuit Language Protection Act. The legislation aims to achieve full equality of the three official languages, Inuit, French and English. Government of Nunavut employees will have the right to perform all their duties in the Inuit Language. Services to members of the public will remain available in all three official languages. Nunavut sees itself as having a special responsibility to ensure the long-term survival of the Inuit language, and to promote its use and development in all aspects of Nunavut society.

The Yukon Native Language Center in Whitehorse, Yukon, is administered by the Council of Yukon First Nations with funds provided by the Government of Yukon. It commenced in 1977 under the name Yukon Native Language Project.

Today the Centre staff is actively teaching, documenting, and promoting Yukon Native languages:

- YNLC offers training and certification for Yukon Aboriginal Teachers. ... The graduates and students currently enrolled in these programs serve as teachers in many communities of the Yukon, British Columbia, Northwest Territories and Alaska.
- YNLC develops teaching and learning materials for all the Yukon aboriginal languages. ... 
- YNLC works with First Nations Elders to document Yukon native traditions, oral history, personal names, and place names. YNLC also assists First Nations and other organizations with translations, transcriptions, and signage.
- YNLC provides information and materials on Yukon languages to First Nations, government and educational organizations, researchers, media outlets, and to the many interested individuals who regularly visit and phone the Centre.
(http://www.ynlc.ca/ynlc/index.html)

South America
In an interesting paper, Nancy Hornberger (2000) traces developments in language policy and education reform in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia in the light of the tension between the ‘standardising’ force of education and the increasing calls to make room for and to promote diversity—a tension between assimilationism and pluralism. In this region, governments tend to use the term intercultural instead of bicultural because the term intercultural tends to suggest interaction with majority culture rather than separation from it. Moves towards bilingual education began in Peru in the 1970s, in Ecuador in the 1980s and in Bolivia in the 1990s. Perhaps as a result of these timing differences Hornberger traces a significant difference in interpretation of the use of intercultural/ity which she summarises in Figure 2 (Hornberger, 2000 p. 178). She also notes that Peru implemented its bilingual education as a top-down process, Ecuador as a ‘grass-roots’ movement and Bolivia as a combination of the two. She argues that this shows that “a strengthened (intercultural) national identity is based on respect among all groups and discrimination against none”. In other words what is needed is what is known in Australia as ‘two way’ education, not one way bilingual education, which risks being assimilationist in a similar way to monolingual education in the dominant language.

Figure 2. What does Interculturality mean in the policies?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Groups</th>
<th>Peru</th>
<th>Ecuador</th>
<th>Bolivia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Different ethnic groups, each with its own language, culture and history</td>
<td>Indigenous groups (and non-indigenous groups)</td>
<td>Heterogeneous sociocultural groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interculturality</td>
<td>Harmonious dialogue among cultures</td>
<td>Strengthened indigenous identity</td>
<td>Strengthened national identity based on respect for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directionality</td>
<td>One way</td>
<td>One way</td>
<td>Multidirectional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005

Selected Recommendations (abbreviated) of possible relevance to the formulation of a WA Aboriginal Languages Policy

[...] indicates that further detail of the recommendation has been omitted.

Note that the NILS Report addressed the federal level. As a result many recommendations deal with matters that are specific to the federal level, while others would need adapting if they are to be applied to the state or regional/local level. The full fifty two recommendations are listed in the report (Department of Communications Information Technology and the Arts, 2005 pp. 116–122)

Community and regional initiatives

1. A pilot program of Language Nests, which are Indigenous language programs for early childhood, should be established following consultation and a scoping report. [...] 

2. A pilot program of Community Language Teams should be established in a range of communities involving younger and older people. 

These teams would assist in establishing and operating Language Nests and carry out other language maintenance activities, including the preparation of learning resources, in conjunction with the nearest Regional Indigenous Language Centre. [...] 

3. Regional Indigenous Language Centres (RILCs) should operate in all areas of need to provide infrastructure and technical support to Community Language Teams. [...] 

Whole-of-government initiatives

5. All Australian states and territories should consider the introduction of initiatives such as those being employed by the NSW government, including the introduction of an Indigenous language curriculum component in state schools and the founding of a state language centre.

6. In the spirit of a whole-of-government approach, Australian and state/territory government agencies should build links between language maintenance activities and other relevant activities, such as education, native title and land, environmental and parks management, cultural heritage, arts and crafts, and media.

7. Policy coordination between government departments including the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, the department of Education, Science and Training and the Department of Family and Community Services, should be strengthened to implement the key recommendations of this report.
8. All levels of government should support the profile and prestige of Indigenous languages by allowing them to be used in a range of public functions including:
   - Dual naming of places
   - Governmental consultations with communities and individuals
   - Legal situations
   - Health situations.

These functions support the civil rights of Indigenous people to use their languages and will assist them to fully understand government announcements and information.

**Advocacy initiatives**

9. A National Indigenous Languages Centre and Regional Indigenous Language Centres should promote the importance of Indigenous languages in the education sector.

There are widespread misconceptions that adversely affect public attitudes towards Indigenous language programs. These include misperceptions that Indigenous language programs detract from English learning and mainstream education.

A national centre and regional centres would promote the feasibility and value of bilingualism and biliteracy as alternatives to monolingual ‘English-only’ approaches.

Ongoing research of this issue should be fostered by these organizations and by government agencies.

10. Promotion to raise awareness in ‘mainstream’ Australia about the value of Australian Indigenous languages should be undertaken by a National Indigenous Languages Centre, government agencies and other language groups. Such promotions should target the wider Australian community and organizations, such as staff in libraries and archives, and relevant government departments.

**Quality control in language programs**

11. Language programs must be tailored to the type of language situation in the local community.

12. The goals of language programs should be based on specific desired outcomes and be built around achieving:
   - Increased knowledge of the language by members of the community
   - Increased use of the language by members of the community
   - Development of material products on the languages and knowledge systems
   - More positive feelings in the wider Australian community and other agencies towards Indigenous languages.

13. The performance of Regional Indigenous Language Centres and Community Language Teams should be evaluated over three-year periods, starting in 2006, to determine outcomes and set priorities based on the recommendations of this report.
14. To ensure transparency and equity in the support of Indigenous languages across the nation, decisions on the level and type of program support to be provided should be based on objective evidence about the language situations, resources and ability of teams to carry out support activities.

The 10 NILS language endangerment indicators, [...], should be adopted as a standard in Australian Indigenous languages assessment. These indicators can be used to inform decision making on the funding of language programs.

**Translating and interpreting services**

21. For public functions where Indigenous languages should be used, interpreting and translating services should be made available.

This could increase Indigenous employment opportunities. Providing these services could be a role of Regional Indigenous Language Centres and/or Community Language Teams.

22. A translation and interpreting unit should be attached to all those Regional Indigenous Language Centres which have large numbers of Indigenous people who do not speak English well in their region.

**Documentation and accessibility**

23. Special funding should be made available for the urgent documentation of endangered languages and knowledge in priority cases.

Such cases would include situations of severe language endangerment where only a few elderly fluent speakers remain and where it may be necessary to prioritise intensive documentation of their knowledge. [...]

25. Apart from five-yearly national census/surveys by the ABS, more in-depth regional surveys should be carried out to capture the kind of data assembled in this report and based on the 10 NILS Report language endangerment indicators.

Where feasible these regional surveys should be carried out by Regional Indigenous Language Centres on a rolling basis (eg two to three regions every two years) and should be incorporated where possible into the regular work of the regional centres.

28. Community organisations and language centres should be made aware of the benefits of lodging copies of their material with another organisation for safe-keeping purposes.

This will protect valuable language materials in case of a local disaster or mishap.

29. Protocols and guidelines about how to develop, store and access Indigenous language materials should be developed in consultation with Indigenous communities and collecting institutions.

30. There should be negotiations between communities and funding agencies to develop mutually agreed protocols, which should be written into all funding contracts, to ensure that language materials produced from a program are deposited into archives for safety and under appropriate minimum archival standards.
32. Guidelines for the collection of data on Indigenous language programs should be produced based on good practice (e.g., SA Education Department) and based on the NILS Report language endangerment indicators […]

33. There should be negotiations with communities to ensure that copies of locally based materials are provided to a designated central location, with appropriate access restrictions on material, to ensure the materials are not lost over time.

Possible locations might include state/territory education departments and libraries, AIATSIS, or other organisations with sufficient resources and expertise to be able to manage a collection appropriately.

Training

49. Training of Indigenous teachers should be a priority and should include training in the development of local language and culture programs.

This should especially include training for early childhood work to support the establishment of Languages Nests.

50. Training for Indigenous interpreters to National Accreditation authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) standards should be provided by at least one institution.

51. Training for Indigenous personnel working in the language sector should be provided at certificate, degree and postgraduate levels.
### Regional Aboriginal Language Centres in Western Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kimberley Language Resource Centre</td>
<td>Halls Creek</td>
<td>PMB 11, Halls Creek, WA, 6770&lt;br&gt;(08) 91 686005&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:manager@klrc.org.au">manager@klrc.org.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirima Dawang Woorab-Gerring Language and Culture Centre</td>
<td>Kununurra</td>
<td>PO Box 162, Kununurra, WA, 6743&lt;br&gt;(08) 91 691029&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:manager@mirimaorg.au">manager@mirimaorg.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kimberley Interpreting Service</td>
<td>Kununurra</td>
<td>PO Box 3599, Broome WA, 6725&lt;br&gt;08 9192 3981&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:kis.bookings@westnet.com.au">kis.bookings@westnet.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre</td>
<td>South Hedland</td>
<td>Lotteries House&lt;br&gt;PO Box 2736&lt;br&gt;South Hedland WA 6722&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:wangkamaya@kisser.net.au">wangkamaya@kisser.net.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karikurla Language and Culture Aboriginal Corporation</td>
<td>Kalgoorlie</td>
<td>PO Box 1470, Kalgoorlie, WA, 6430&lt;br&gt;(08) 90 914705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yamaji Ira Wangga Geraldton Language Programme</td>
<td>Geraldton</td>
<td>PO Box 433, Geraldton, WA, 6531&lt;br&gt;(08) 9923 9733</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ATTACHMENT 4

New South Wales Aboriginal Languages Policy
NEW SOUTH WALES
ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES POLICY

24 May 2004
NSW ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES POLICY

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NSW ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal Languages in NSW

Before European colonisation, at least seventy Aboriginal\(^1\) languages and dialects (also referred to as ‘traditional’ or ‘ancestral’ languages) were spoken in the area now known as NSW. These languages, complex in structure and rich in vocabulary, are an essential aspect of Aboriginal Culture.

However, to Aboriginal people, language is much more than just words. It is a direct link to land and country. It holds traditional songs and stories. It is about spirituality and deep meaning, and it reflects unique cultural concepts and ways of looking at the world. As Auntie Rose Fernando, a Gamilaroi Elder, said:

‘Language is our Soul’\(^2\)

As such, language plays a vital role in sustaining a person’s sense of self and cultural identity:

‘It made me feel good when I got up and made a speech [in Gamilaraay, prepared by Yeena Thompson] and all the Elders came up to me and told me how good it made them feel and made them cry’.\(^3\)

Australian history is increasingly thought of as a site of multiple stories. These stories do not displace the central importance of colonisation within Australian history narratives, nor do they challenge how fundamentally disruptive colonisation has been for Aboriginal people.\(^4\)

The impact of colonisation in 1788 led to the forced removal of Aboriginal people from ancestral lands and the loss of freedom and autonomy. Assimilation policies, dislocation, the forced removal of Aboriginal children and the breaking up of families weakened the links of cultural transmission. Language speakers were discouraged, shamed and forbidden to use or teach traditional languages. As a result, Aboriginal languages and cultures suffered enormous erosion.

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\(^1\) In this document, the term ‘Aboriginal’ refers specifically to the Aboriginal people of NSW.

\(^2\) ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ are used interchangeably to refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.

\(^3\) This quote by Auntie Rose Fernando was originally cited in the NSW Aboriginal Languages Interim Framework K-10 (NSW Office of the Board of Studies 1998).

\(^4\) This quote by Carol Barker (1999) was originally cited in Strong Language Strong Culture (Hosking et al. 2000).

---

Today, many traditional languages in NSW have fallen into disuse and others have speakers of varying fluency, from knowing a few words, to being relatively fluent. However, despite the generally declining use of Aboriginal languages and the significant impact of colonisation, there is no such thing as a ‘dead’ or ‘extinct’ language in NSW. Given adequate resources, Aboriginal languages can be revived, but it is critical to act quickly as the remaining speakers are few and rapidly disappearing.

The NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy (the Policy) will assist Aboriginal people and communities across NSW to revitalise traditional languages by utilising and building on existing knowledge, and encouraging the structural changes necessary, to implement language projects where so desired.

**The Need for a NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy**

Half of the world’s 6800 languages are likely to vanish within two generations. In NSW, the situation is particularly critical as most remaining speakers are elderly, and in most cases, there is little or no language transmission to younger generations.

The need for this Policy arises from:

- the importance placed by Aboriginal people on the revitalisation of traditional languages\(^5\) and to be able to continue to access these languages
- the uniqueness of Aboriginal languages, and the fact that these languages are presently at crisis point and may disappear unless appropriate and timely action is taken
- the role of both Federal and State Governments to assist Aboriginal people to preserve traditional languages, both as a fundamental part of Aboriginal Culture and as a unique aspect of the Australian heritage
- the need for greater support to aid in the preservation of NSW Aboriginal languages
- the general lack of public awareness about NSW Aboriginal languages and
- the need for increased coordination between language revitalisation programs both within State Government and between Federal and State Governments.

**The Foundations of the Policy**

This Policy is supported by:

1. The recognition that Australia is a signatory to a number of human rights instruments which recognise the protection and promotion of language.

\(^5\) In this document, ‘language revitalisation’ is used in its generic sense, and covers activities such as language reclamation, revival, renewal, maintenance and awareness, unless specific reference is made to these activities.
2. The acknowledgment through official policy which the Commonwealth, States and Territories are signatories to, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages should be maintained; and

3. Current Government and community programs in NSW that promote the revitalisation of Aboriginal languages.

Refer to Appendix A for further detail.

The Process of Policy Development

- The last ten to twenty years have seen an increase in interest by Aboriginal people and communities for the revitalisation of traditional languages. The many community-initiated projects, and the ongoing work of community members together with linguists, have laid the foundation for a broader language revitalisation policy in NSW.

- The NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy has been developed by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA), in close collaboration with the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Office of the Board of Studies (OBOS). In developing the Policy, DAA has also worked closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG).

- In addition, DAA has negotiated with the following organisations/people: NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC); Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages (FATSIL); the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS); NSW Catholic Education Commission (CEC); and Aboriginal people and Elders involved in language revitalisation projects across NSW.

- Based on this negotiation, as well as considerable existing information, a Draft Policy was prepared and reviewed by the NSW Aboriginal Languages Forum, a forum convened by the DAA, to discuss Aboriginal language programs and initiatives across NSW.

- In September 2002, the Draft Policy was publicly released for comment by Aboriginal people and communities across NSW. As part of this process, DAA held nine (9) regional forums across the State. Feedback was also collected through surveys, email and phone.

- This final draft document is a direct result of the comments received from Aboriginal people and communities across the State.

Recent Policy Initiatives

The importance of language maintenance is reflected in two major policy documents in NSW.

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6 The NSW Aboriginal Languages Forum is an advisory forum convened by the DAA, and includes membership from the OBOS, DET, AECG, ATSIC, NSWALC, CEC, AIATSIS and FATSIL, as well as a number of Aboriginal Elders from NSW Aboriginal communities actively involved in the implementation of language maintenance programs.
The *NSW Aboriginal Education Policy*, rewritten in 1996, advocates that 'Aboriginal languages be maintained, revived and reclaimed'.

This is reinforced by the *NSW Government Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal People*, which states that 'Language is an important component of cultural heritage and identity ... the importance of learning Aboriginal languages is recognised as a vital part of Aboriginal students' experience'.

In recent years, State commitment to Aboriginal languages has resulted in the development of a number of initiatives by NSW government agencies. For example, in 1998, the NSW Office of the Board of Studies (OBOS) released the *NSW Aboriginal Languages Interim Framework K-10*, a document designed to support the teaching of Aboriginal languages in schools. Following on from this document, the OBOS has developed a formal Aboriginal languages syllabus which has been recently endorsed. This work is being conducted in close partnership with Aboriginal people and relevant organisations.

In addition, the DET has prepared a consultation paper *Towards the Development of a New TAFE NSW Certificate III in Teaching Skills: Aboriginal Languages*. The aim of this paper is to generate stakeholder feedback on the development of a TAFE NSW course designed to provide participants with the skills and knowledge required to teach Aboriginal languages.

2. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The broad purpose of the NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy is to assist Aboriginal people and communities across NSW to revitalise traditional languages, as a fundamental part of Aboriginal Culture and as a unique component of the Australian heritage.

The Policy provides a framework for language revitalisation in NSW but does not outline a commitment to additional resources.

3. PRINCIPLES FOR THE POLICY

The following basic principles underpin the NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy:

**Importance to Aboriginal people to revitalise and maintain traditional languages**

The NSW Government recognises the significance to Aboriginal people of revitalising and maintaining their traditional languages, as an integral part of Aboriginal Culture. Language revitalisation and maintenance are fundamental components in achieving social justice for Aboriginal people in NSW.

**Commitment of the NSW Government to assist language revitalisation activities**

The revitalisation of Aboriginal languages is a complex process, which necessitates appropriate knowledge, skills, resources and long-term commitment.
In recognising the importance of language to Aboriginal people in NSW and its unique status within the Australian heritage, the NSW Government supports the assistance of Aboriginal people to revitalise and maintain traditional languages through both existing and new initiatives.

Recognition of community languages
The NSW Government recognises that Aboriginal people have a clear sense of ownership of their language.

Recognition of the diversity of Aboriginal communities
Aboriginal people and communities operate under a diversity of socio-cultural circumstances that play a key role in determining which type of language program is appropriate to a given community. For example, some communities are in a position to implement fairly advanced language programs, while others may be at the very initial stages of language revitalisation. Moreover, due to the historical dislocation of Aboriginal people from traditional lands, many communities comprise individuals from a diversity of traditional languages and dialects.

The NSW Government recognises the diversity of needs present in Aboriginal communities, and acknowledges that the relevant traditional language group must retain control over the type of language program implemented, its scope and contents.

Commitment to Aboriginal participation in all decision-making
The NSW Government acknowledges the importance of, and encourages the involvement of Aboriginal people in all decision-making processes relating to the design and implementation of language policies and programs in NSW.

Commitment to self-determination
The NSW Government is committed to promoting the principles of self-determination by implementing language policies and programs which enable the development of knowledge, skills and leadership within Aboriginal communities.

Commitment to better coordination of services
The NSW Government is committed to achieving improved coordination of services as they relate to language revitalisation, both within State Government and between State Government, federal Government, Local Government and relevant non-governmental organisations.

4. FOCUS AREAS

The Policy has the following focus areas:

- Language programs in Aboriginal communities
- Language programs in the educational system

\[\text{In this document, 'the educational system' includes pre-schools, primary schools, high schools – both government and non-government, TAFE's, universities and any other relevant educational institutions.}\]
Language programs in gaols and detention centres
Aboriginal languages in the broader community

5. GOALS

In each of the above focus areas, where resources allow and other priorities have been met, the goals of this Policy are:

- **Language programs in Aboriginal communities**

  *That Aboriginal communities wishing to implement local language revitalisation programs be supported to do so.*

- **Language programs in the educational system**

  *That Aboriginal students in NSW have an increased opportunity to learn their Aboriginal language of origin or another language, as determined by the local Aboriginal community.*

- **Language programs in gaols and detention centres**

  *That Aboriginal people, including Aboriginal youths, in gaols and detention centres have an increased opportunity to learn their Aboriginal language of origin or another language as determined by the local Aboriginal community.*

- **Aboriginal languages in the broader community**

  *That the NSW population have an understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal languages as an integral part of Aboriginal Culture and the Australian heritage.*

This is a cross-agency Policy, and as such, making progress towards these goals is the responsibility of all State Government agencies. However, some agencies (referred to as 'primary agencies') are identified as holding primary responsibility. These are:

- The NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs;
- The NSW Office of the Board of Studies;
- The NSW Department of Education and Training; and
- The NSW Department of Corrective Services.

In working towards the goals of this Policy, the primary agencies will work in close partnership with ATSIC, FATSIL, NSWALC, AECG, AIATSIS and other relevant Aboriginal organisations, as well as other Government agencies including, but not restricted to, Attorney General’s Department, the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Department of Environment and Conservation.

The primary agencies will also ensure that Aboriginal people and local Aboriginal communities are actively involved in all decision-making processes relating to the implementation of this Policy.
6. OBJECTIVES

This section outlines specific objectives under each Policy goal. Programs and activities to achieve the objectives will only be developed and offered where resources allow and other priorities have been met (see Section 7- Policy Implementation).

- Language programs in Aboriginal communities

That Aboriginal communities wishing to implement local language revitalisation programs be empowered to do so.

Objectives:

- To enable Aboriginal people and communities to have access to available language revitalisation and technical expertise, in particular linguistic, educational and/or other technical expertise, as required to develop and implement local language revitalisation community programs.

- To enable Aboriginal people and communities have facilitated access to linguistic archives and materials relating to their traditional language group(s) where available.

- To enable Aboriginal people’s access to training in the field of language revitalisation through a coordinated approach that ensures efficient use of resources.

- To encourage research into aspects of language revitalisation that is relevant to NSW Aboriginal people.

- To enable Aboriginal people direct input into the allocation of resources so as to directly benefit from research and programs.

- To enable local and regional language centres across the state to play a key role in the development of local language protocols.

- Language programs in the educational system

That Aboriginal students in NSW have an increased opportunity to learn their Aboriginal language of origin or another language, as determined by the local Aboriginal community.

Objectives:

- Where Aboriginal language programs are developed in state educational institutions they must be based on the key underlying principle that the members of a particular traditional language group
have ownership of that language and its associated teaching programs. Therefore, relevant members of the language group whose language is proposed to be taught will negotiate with educational institutions regarding:

- When language should be taught;
- Who should teach language;
- Who should be taught language; and
- How language should be taught (i.e., which teaching methods are culturally appropriate).

- To ensure that educational institutions proposing to teach Aboriginal languages obtain prior approval from the traditional language group whose country the language will be taught on.

- To recognise Aboriginal language taught in NSW primary and high schools as a subject for which a formal language curriculum will be developed and implemented where so desired and in partnership with Aboriginal people.

- To ensure that all staff including principals will actively support Aboriginal language programs where these are supported or desired by the local Aboriginal community where resources permit.

- To ensure that Aboriginal language speakers who deliver courses within education systems/institutions are fully recognised by these authorities for their language and cultural expertise.

- To provide support to Aboriginal people employed as language teachers in NSW schools and provide access to and encourage the pursuit of, professional development opportunities.

### Language programs in gaols and detention centres

*That Aboriginal people, including Aboriginal youths, in gaols and detention centres have an increased opportunity to learn their Aboriginal language of origin or another language as determined by the local Aboriginal community.*

**Objectives:**

- To support increased access of Aboriginal people in gaols and detention centres to Aboriginal language programs for their language of origin where possible, and where this has been approved by both the traditional language group whose language is proposed to be taught, and the traditional language group whose country the gaol or detention centre is located on. Where the relevant language program cannot be accessed, Aboriginal people in gaols and detention centres may have the opportunity to learn another language as determined by the traditional language group whose country the gaol or detention centre is located on.
To support access to language materials and resources relevant to the range of NSW Aboriginal languages if no language program can be accessed.

To ensure that Aboriginal language speakers teaching an Aboriginal language in gaols and/or detention centres have prior endorsement of the traditional language group whose language they are teaching.

Aboriginal languages in the broader community

*That the NSW population have an understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal languages as an integral part of Aboriginal Culture and the Australian heritage.*

Objective:

To ensure that NSW Government staff and the broader NSW population will achieve a greater understanding and appreciation of the significance of Aboriginal languages both to Aboriginal people and as an integral part of the Australian heritage.

7. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy will occur in two stages.

**Stage 1 Development of a NSW Aboriginal Languages Strategic Plan**

In Year 1 of the Policy, the primary agencies will lead the development of a comprehensive NSW Aboriginal Languages Strategic Plan.

The Plan will be developed recognising that languages services will only be developed and offered where resources allow and other priorities have been met. To ensure this, the primary agencies will undertake a review of priorities and resources in the early stages of the process and prior to consultation.

The Strategic Plan will outline:

- appropriate programs and strategies to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in this Policy;
- the appropriate level and source of funding required to implement programs and strategies; and
- appropriate performance indicators, to monitor the effectiveness of programs and strategies.

In preparing the Strategic Plan, the primary agencies will actively liaise and negotiate with relevant NSW Government agencies, Commonwealth agencies and Local Government.

The primary agencies will also negotiate with ATSIC Regional Councils, NSWALC, AECG and AIATSIS, as well as other members of the NSW Aboriginal Languages Forum.
Thirdly, the primary agencies will ensure that Aboriginal people and local Aboriginal communities are actively involved in all decision-making processes relating to the preparation of the Strategic Plan.

Stage 2 Implementation of the Strategic Plan
Once the NSW Aboriginal Languages Strategic Plan has been finalised, all agencies identified in the Strategic Plan will be required to report progress in its implementation.

Monitoring, reporting and review are an integral part of the NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy, and will comprise the following components:

- ongoing monitoring of program effectiveness and impact through the use of relevant quantitative as well as qualitative performance indicators;
- yearly agency assessment of programs and strategies being implemented, outcomes achieved and implications for the future; and
- yearly reporting through each primary agency’s Annual Report\(^8\).

The above information will be collated by the DAA, for consideration by the NSW Aboriginal Languages Forum.

At the end of Year 5 (2007), a report summarising the impact of the NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy and its Strategic Plan will be prepared by the DAA. This report will inform the Policy for the next five years (2008-2012).

The NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy will also inform the new Aboriginal Affairs Plan *Two Ways Together*, through its cluster group action plans. *Two Ways Together* is a ten year plan that establishes ways to make sure that Aboriginal people have a strong voice in planning and deciding how their needs are met and has a strong focus on whole of Government coordination. One of the key features of *Two Ways Together* is that government agencies will work in a coordinated approach through the development of action plans in seven identified cluster group areas.

8. REFERENCES


\(^8\) This is an administrative requirement.


NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs (2000). *New South Wales Aboriginal Seniors Yarn Up*.

NSW Department of School Education (1996). *NSW Aboriginal Education Policy*.


Appendix A  Foundations of the Policy

International
Internationally, Australia is a signatory to a number of human rights instruments which recognise the protection and promotion of language as a fundamental human right.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognise the right of all people to participate in the cultural life of their community. Moreover, it is recognised that it is not sufficient for signatory Governments to simply ensure legal equality. There is also an obligation to take positive steps towards achieving substantive equality. There is a direct link between the vitality of a culture and the preservation and use of its language. Thus, in order for Aboriginal people to participate fully in their cultural life, access to traditional languages is imperative.

The recognition of access to one’s language as a fundamental human right is also emphasized in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities. The latter of these instruments also places a positive duty on States to encourage conditions for the promotion of the linguistic identity of minorities. International human rights instruments therefore require positive action on the part of governments to ensure the maintenance of language and culture.

Federal
Support for the maintenance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages has been official Commonwealth policy since the release of the Federal Government’s 1987 National Policy on Languages. More recently, the report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991) and the Bringing Them Home report (1997) both highlighted the importance of the preservation of traditional languages for the well-being of Aboriginal people.

In 1989, the Commonwealth, States and Territories jointly released the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP), a statement on the future of education policies and programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The AEP requires the development of programs to support the maintenance and continued use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages.

In 1991, the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) proposed a number of objectives regarding Aboriginal languages:

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9 UDHR Article 27
10 ICESCR Article 15
11 Convention of the Rights of the Child Article 30
12 Declaration of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities Article 2
13 Declaration of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities Article 1
To establish long-term planning in Aboriginal language issues that fully involves Aboriginal people.
- To support the implementation of high quality Aboriginal language programs appropriate to the needs of the communities, in negotiation with Aboriginal communities.
- To increase the supply and quality of teachers of Aboriginal languages and to ensure more effective learning.
- To provide professional development for Aboriginal people involved in language maintenance and development programs.

In the years following, several reports reinforced the objectives of the ALLP. In 1992, the report of an inquiry by the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, *Language and Culture - A Matter of Survival*, emphasized:

- the need to encourage linguistic training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through appropriate training institutions and traineeship programs;
- the need to encourage State and Territory Governments together with unions and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to develop an appropriate pay scale for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language speakers employed as such, to reflect the special skills they possess.

In 1996, a report commissioned by the Australian Language and Literacy Council, *The Land Still Speaks*, recommended that:

- Commonwealth and State funding in support of Indigenous language maintenance and development be maintained or increased as an important component of a total justice package for Indigenous people.
- State and Commonwealth education authorities recognise the indispensable language and culture expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language speakers as valid for the purposes of employment within teaching and curriculum development teams.
- State education authorities ensure that teachers and principals in schools in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities actively support language and culture programs (where these are supported or desired by the local Indigenous community) and the ‘Aboriginalisation’ of decision-making and control.
- State education authorities recognise Indigenous language and culture as a core subject to be developed and taught by, or under the control of local community elders in schools in communities with a significant Indigenous population.

In 2000, a report commissioned by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), *Strong Language Strong Culture*, recognised that traditional languages in NSW have been chronically under funded and under-resourced. *Strong Language Strong Culture* strongly advocated increased funding and resources for NSW languages as fundamental to the long-term revitalisation of Aboriginal languages in this State.
The importance of language maintenance as outlined in relevant Federal policies is reflected in two major policy documents in NSW.

The *NSW Aboriginal Education Policy*, rewritten in 1996, advocates that 'Aboriginal languages be maintained, revived and reclaimed'.

This is reinforced by the *NSW Government Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal People*, which states that 'Language is an important component of cultural heritage and identity ... the importance of learning Aboriginal languages is recognised as a vital part of Aboriginal students' experience'.

In recent years, State commitment to Aboriginal languages has resulted in the development by NSW government agencies of a number of initiatives. For example, in 1998, the NSW Office of the Board of Studies (OBOS) released the *NSW Aboriginal Languages Interim Framework K-10*, a document designed to support the teaching of Aboriginal languages in schools. Following on from this document, the OBOS has developed a formal Aboriginal languages syllabus which has been recently endorsed. This work is being conducted in close partnership with Aboriginal people and relevant organisations.

The NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) funds Aboriginal language programs in a number of NSW schools. In addition, the DET has prepared a consultation paper *Towards the Development of a New TAFE NSW Certificate III in Teaching Skills: Aboriginal Languages*. The aim of this paper is to generate stakeholder feedback on the development of a TAFE NSW course designed to provide participants with the skills and knowledge required to teach Aboriginal languages.

Through its Major Grants Program, the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) has funded a number of language revitalisation projects. Between 1998 and 2000, the Major Grants Program allocated $80,000 to language projects in NSW.

In 2002-2003, the NSW Government committed a total of $279,000 to the establishment of a NSW Aboriginal Languages Resource and Research Centre (the Centre), with $1.019 Million allocated to this initiative over four years. The Centre will support local community language projects by providing ongoing technical advice, training and research assistance to Aboriginal people, to revitalise and preserve traditional languages.

Finally, the Geographical Names Board of NSW has released a *Dual Naming Policy and Draft Guidelines*. Recognising the fact that both European and Aboriginal names reflect the history, culture and identity of NSW, this document enables the use of alternative Aboriginal names to physical and environmental features which already have an official name.

These State initiatives parallel considerable and ongoing activity by Aboriginal communities to implement local language revitalisation programs.

The Draft NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy builds on both State initiatives, as well as local and regional community language programs.