Chapter 3:
The perilous state of Indigenous languages in Australia

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3.1 Introduction

When I commenced writing this chapter in 2008, Australia did not have a national Indigenous languages policy. However in August 2009, for the first time in Australia's history, the Commonwealth Government launched a strategy for preserving Indigenous languages: *Indigenous Languages – A National Approach 2009* (National Approach). The National Approach sets out the Commonwealth Government's plan to preserve Indigenous languages through targeted actions. They are:

- Increasing information about Indigenous languages in all spheres of Australian life
- Improving coordination of language centre activity
- Supporting language programs in schools
- Undertaking a feasibility study to develop a National Indigenous Languages Centre.

The National Approach document can be seen in full at Appendix A.[1]

It is extremely pleasing that the National Approach is guided by a number of the recommendations from the *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005* (Survey Report).[2] The Survey Report provides the most comprehensive analysis of the Indigenous language situation in Australia to date, and proposes some strategic and programmatic solutions to redress the language decline. I do not intend to replicate this work. In this chapter I intend to set out some of the challenges ahead for Indigenous language preservation and revitalisation in the light of the National Approach.

(a) Context

The challenges to preserve and revitalise Indigenous languages are considerable. Indigenous languages are critically endangered in Australia and they continue to die out at a rapid rate. Prior to colonisation, Australia had 250 distinct languages which are able to be subdivided into 600 dialects.[3] According to the *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report*

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1   Australian Government Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, *Indigenous Languages – A National Approach, The importance of Australia's Indigenous languages*. At http://www.arts.gov.au/indigenous/languages_policy (viewed 3 September 2009).

2   Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages, *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005*. At http://www.arts.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/35637/nils-report-2005.pdf (viewed 3 July 2009).

3   J Lo Bianco, Organizing for Multilingualism: Ecological and Sociological Perspectives A TESOL Symposium on Keeping Language Diversity Alive, 2008, p11, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia, July 9, 2008.

2005, most of the original languages are no longer spoken. Today only 18 Indigenous languages are spoken by all generations of people within a given language group, and even these languages are endangered.[4] There are approximately 100 Indigenous languages which still exist in some form in Australia, though many of them are in an advanced stage of endangerment. Small numbers of older people are the only full speakers of these languages. Without intervention the language knowledge will cease to exist in the next 10 to 30 years.[5]

The loss of languages in Australia has received international attention. A significant international study on language endangerment has singled out Australia as a place where languages are disappearing at a faster rate than anywhere else in the world.[6] Since the early 1990s, international agencies such as UNESCO have been working to prevent the extinction of many of the world's languages. The *Red Book* is UNESCO's documentation of the decline of languages and a call to governments the world over, to take urgent action to preserve endangered languages.

In terms of cultural heritage, the loss of Indigenous languages in Australia is a loss for all Australians. For the Indigenous peoples whose languages are affected, the loss has wide ranging impacts on culture, identity and health. Cultural knowledge and concepts are carried through languages. Where languages are eroded and lost, so too is the cultural knowledge. This in turn has potential to impact on the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples. There is now significant research which demonstrates that strong culture and identity are protective factors for Indigenous people, assisting us to develop resilience.

Decades of Australian government policies and practices have banned and discouraged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from speaking our languages during the assimilation years.[7] Many people who were forcibly taken to hostels and missions lost their languages due to the prohibitionist polices and practices of governments and churches. These policies and practices lasted in Australia right up to the 1970s.

It is only since the 1970s that Australian governments have taken any action to preserve Indigenous languages. In 1974 bilingual education programs were established in the Northern Territory and Western Australia, and in the 1980s Commonwealth funds were provided to establish community language programs across the country. These resources have been significant in terms of language preservation, though they arrived too late for the majority of Australia's Indigenous languages.

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4   Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages, *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005*, Executive Summary. At http://www.arts.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/35637/nils-report-2005.pdf (viewed 3 July 2009).

5   Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages, *National Indigenous Languages survey 2005*, p 67. At http://www.arts.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/35637/nils-report-2005.pdf (viewed 3 July 2009).

6   D Nettle, S Romaine, *Vanishing Voices: The extinction of the world's languages*, 2000, Oxford University Press, Précis. At http://users.ox.ac.uk/~romaine/vvoices.html (viewed 3 July 2009); and UNESCO Atlas of World's Endangered languages 2009. At http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/indox.php?pg=00206 (viewed 3 July 2009).

7   P Mühlhäusler, PR Damania, Economic Costs and Benefits of Australian Indigenous Languages, Discussion Paper, 2004, p 22, Australian Government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services. At http://www.arts.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/14730/economic-costs-benefits-indigenous-languages-discussion-paper.pdf (viewed 10 November 2009).

Responsibility for Indigenous languages currently sits with the Federal Government. The Department of Environment Heritage and the Arts provides the funding for language resource centres across Australia and for language revival and language maintenance programs.

In August 2009 the Australian Government released the National Approach with the aim of preserving and promoting Indigenous languages. This policy comes at a crucial time. It reflects the will of the Government to take remedial action. However, the National Approach is not accompanied by an increase in funding and therefore can do little more than is currently being done to prevent the language decline.

The current situation regarding support and promotion of Indigenous languages is fraught by differing and contradictory policies across the Commonwealth, state and territory governments. On the one hand, the Commonwealth has a National Approach which acknowledges the value of Indigenous languages and supports their preservation and promotion. On the other hand, some state and territory governments have policies which ignore Indigenous languages or limit Indigenous language teaching in the interests of promoting English literacy.[8] Current Indigenous language policy in Australia is inconsistent and in some cases contradictory.

At this stage, the political will of the Commonwealth Government will not be enough to shift the decline in Indigenous languages. It is the states and territories that control the education systems and set the policies which govern much of the language policy implementation. We have seen over the past year, for example, efforts of the Northern Territory government to dismantle bilingual education by making it mandatory for schools to teach the first four hours in English. In most of Australia's other states and territories, Indigenous language activity is endorsed in principle, but implementation of language programs is left to the discretion of local school administrations and school principals. We know that school education is crucial in the preservation of Indigenous languages, and therefore the policies of the states and territories are very important.[9]

This chapter sets out evidence demonstrating that there are benefits associated with preserving Indigenous languages and consequential costs associated with losing them. The chapter also sets out a course of action aimed at preserving and reviving Indigenous languages in the context of the new National Approach for Indigenous languages. The chapter is divided into six sections:

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8   Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, *Parents support bilingual policy: Henderson*, ABC News Online, 24 November 2008. At http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/11/24/2428555.htm (viewed 1 September 2009); Four Corners Paul Henderson interviewed by Debbie Whitmont 14 September 2009. At http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/content/2009/s2685585.htm (viewed 1 September 2009).

9   Kulunga Research Network, *Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey*, Chapter 2, Characteristics of the population, p 33. At http://www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/files/user17/Volume1_Chapter2.pdf (viewed 4 April 2009).

3.2 Why preserve Indigenous languages?

Language and culture are interdependent. It has long been understood that language is the verbal expression of culture. It is the medium through which culture is carried and transferred. Stories, songs and the nuanced meaning of words contain the key to understanding one's world and one's part within it. Strong culture gives the individual a sense of belonging to people and places. For this reason, language and culture are deeply interconnected and core parts of one's identity.

There is now a significant body of evidence which demonstrates a range of benefits for Indigenous peoples and minority groups when they maintain strong connections with their languages and culture. Having one's mother tongue bestows various social, emotional, employment, cognitive and health advantages. Bilingualism provides yet another layer of advantage for minority language speakers. Keeping the mother tongue and then mastering English for example, provides minority language speakers with the advantage of being able to operate in different contexts. This in turn increases one's life chances and employment options.

(a) Promotes resilience

A 2007 research project in the United States found strong correlations between language and culture and the development of resilience in minority communities. The study found 'that both traditional and cultural factors were predictors of resilient outcomes (i.e., positive quality of life indicators) for African Americans in [high risk urban communities]'.[10] The International Child and Youth Care Network found in 2004 that strong culture and identity are protective factors for people in vulnerable situations, including young people in out-of-home environments.

> Children and young people's ethnicity, religion, culture and language form part of their identity. Preservation of their background and culture helps to create continuity and a secure base …[11]

However, where there is loss of language and culture, there are negative impacts on resilience and this can lead to stress and problems with socialisation and communication.

> When children lose productive as well as receptive knowledge of their native language, communication barriers result. Moreover, given a population of preschool-aged children, such barriers can be disastrous as parents are then limited in their ability to socialize and teach their children during a critical period of early childhood social, cognitive, and linguistic development. In such instances, parents are left unable to transmit knowledge, cultural values, and belief systems effectively.[12]

In Australia, the loss of language has been measured to have specific negative impacts on the generations who are directly affected. The *Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey* found high levels of acculturative stress in children living in regional centres where language loss was occurring.

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10   S Utsey, M Bolden, Y Lanier, O Williams, *Examining the Role of Culture-Specific Coping as a Predictor of Resilient Outcomes in African Americans From High-Risk Urban Communities*, Journal of Black Psychology 2007 33: 75–93. Extract. At http://jbp.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/33/1/75 (viewed 22 June 2009).

11   K Maclean, *Resilience: What it is and how children and young people can be helped to develop it*, CYC Online, Issue 62, March 2004. At http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0304-resilience.html (viewed 22 June 2009).

12   P Lee, 'Cognitive development in bilingual children: A case for bilingual instruction in early childhood education'. *Bilingual Research Journal,* Summer 1996, p 10-11. At http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3722/is_199607/ai_n8751476/ (viewed 31 August 2009).

> … the rate of traditional language loss is greatest in those larger rural communities (e.g. Kalgoorlie, Broome, Port Hedland, Carnarvon) that are service and educational centres for more remote, outlying traditional Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal children in these communities not surprisingly experience more acculturative stress than those within more traditional communities and those in larger metropolitan centres.[13]

The stress of being denied instruction in one's mother tongue in the school context can set up a powerful sense of failure in young people. Two students for North East Arnhem Land had the following to say about the use of English in the classroom:

> We don't retain information – we hear teaching, especially in English and feel that we don't grasp what is being taught, and so it disappears. We go to school, hear something, go home, and the teaching is gone. We feel hopeless. Is there something wrong with our heads because this English just does not work for us? In the end, we smoke marijuana to make us feel better about ourselves. But that then has a bad effect on us. We want to learn English words but the teachers cannot communicate with us to teach us. It is like we are aliens to each other. We need radio programs in [traditional Indigenous] language that can also teach us English. That way we will understand what we learn.[14]

Being taught to learn in one's own language is one way to avoid the stress of acculturation to a new language environment. This is what the bilingual education models seek to provide. Bilingual approaches allow students to develop their first literacy in their mother tongue while gradually introducing English into the learning environment.

(b) Improved health

While Australia lacks research on culture and resilience, we do have longitudinal research data which demonstrates a correlation between strong language and culture in Indigenous homeland communities and positive health outcomes. A ten year study of Indigenous Australians in Central Australia found that '**connectedness to culture, family and land**, and opportunities for self-determination' assist in significantly

lower morbidity and mortality rates in Homeland residents.[15] The study compared the rates of cardiovascular disease in the Alyawarr and Anmatyerr people of the Utopia Homeland communities with the rates amongst the Indigenous population of Northern Territory. In the Utopia homelands, high value is placed on the maintenance of strong mother tongue languages and traditional cultural practices. The study found that residents of these communities were less likely to be obese, less likely to have diabetes and less prone to cardiovascular disease than Indigenous people across the rest of the Northern Territory. Interestingly, the study found that 'conventional measures of employment, income, housing and education did not account for this health differential. Strong connections to traditional ways of life were the predictors for the better health outcomes.

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13   Kulunga Research Network, *Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey*, Chapter 2, Characteristics of the population, p 33. At http://www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/files/user17/Volume1_Chapter2.pdf (viewed 4 April 2009).

14   P Anderson, R Wild, *Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle Little Children are Sacred Report*, 2007, p 147. At http://www.inquirysaac.nt.gov.au/pdf/bipacsa_final_report.pdf (viewed 14 June 2009).

15   KG Rowley, et al, *Lower than expected morbidity and mortality for an Australian Aboriginal population: 10-year follow-up in a decentralised community,* The Medical Journal of Australia. At http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/188_05_030308/row10886_fm.html (viewed 2 December 2008).

(c)   Improved cognitive functioning

Research from the United States shows that there are opportunities in valuing one's first language, and costs associated with losing the mother tongue language in the early years of schooling. The evidence showed that improved cognitive function in children was achieved through bilingualism, where the mother tongue was valued at home and in the classroom, and the second language (such as English) was added.

> Long and Padilla … found that children whose low status native language was valued and fully used in the household performed better in school than children whose low status LI (first language) was neglected and substituted with L2 (second language) at home. Moreover, Dube and Herbert (1975) found that school performance and linguistic proficiency in both languages increased when children's mother tongue was valued and used in the classroom.[16]

The cognitive advantages of bilingualism appear at the earliest stages of learning. Recent studies by the United States National Academy of Sciences identified greater brain plasticity in bilingual infants compared with non-bilingual infants at the pre-language stage. The study showed that the bilingual infants are more likely to learn new responses than non-bilingual infants.[17]

With the understanding that bilingualism and multilingualism actually enhance cognitive developmental processes in children, a number of states in South East Asia are currently embarking on country-wide initiatives to promote and practice bilingual education in schools.[18]

Nine Asia-Pacific countries are developing and supporting approaches to assist ethno-linguistic minority groups who are generally recognised as being disadvantaged by national educational systems. The nine countries are participating in a UNESCO project in an effort to maintain the linguistic and cultural diversity of each region, in recognition of the fact that one's mother tongue plays a crucial role in literacy acquisition.

The potential for languages to be lost in Asia is dramatic when one considers that while there are more than 2000 spoken languages, only 45 of them are official languages with formal status in school and learning environments.[19]

(d)   Increased employment options

Cultural knowledge has been proven to assist in the employment of Indigenous people in Australia. For example, Indigenous cultural knowledge is increasingly playing a role in preserving the biodiversity of Australia's fragile eco-systems. Knowledges that have been passed down through Indigenous languages have been essential for preserving ancestral lands over the millennia. These knowledges are now being used in fire abatement processes. Skilled Indigenous fire managers are working with the broader community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect

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16   P Lee, 'Cognitive development in bilingual children: A case for bilingual instruction in early childhood education'. *Bilingual Research Journal*, Summer 1996, p 9. At http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3722/is_199607/ai_n8751476/ (viewed 31 August 2009).

17   A Kovács, J Mehler, *Cognitive gains in 7-month-old bilingual infants* National Academy of Sciences, April 21, 2009 vol. 106 no. 16 6556-6560. At http://www.pnas.org/content/106/16/6556.short (viewed 31 August 2009).

18   UNESCO, *Promoting Literacy in Multilingual Settings*, 2007, UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education. At http://www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/100/multilingual.pdf (viewed 3 July 2009).

19   UNESCO, *Promoting Literacy in Multilingual Settings*, 2007, p 2 UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education. At http://www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/100/multilingual.pdf (viewed 3 July 2009).

culture and the biodiversity of large areas in Arnhem Land and elsewhere.[20] Fire abatement is increasingly important as the globe heats and dry season fires burn longer and hotter.[21]

Indigenous languages and cultural knowledges have been associated with understanding the patterns of climate change and ways to address its impacts. The 2006 Garnaut Review into climate change reported that the Torres Strait Islander people had noticed changes in animal and plant behaviour and different patterns in seasonal temperatures.[22] Indigenous cultural knowledge about the seasons and the corresponding plant and animal behaviour dates back thousands of years. Traditional languages have vast vocabularies for naming species and describing their ecology which are little known to Western science. This is an endangered area of knowledge, and the loss of it would disadvantage all Australians. The same deep cultural knowledge that is contained in language has also been essential for Indigenous Australians to demonstrate their connection to country when they are making Native Title claims.

The art and tourism industries provide an important stream of employment for Indigenous people. Indigenous cultural knowledge is the foundation of these industries and benefits from Indigenous cultural industries flow on to other Australians and to the Australian economy. In 2001–02, the Tourism Satellite Account reported that more than $70 billion worth of tourism goods and services were consumed in Australia.[23]

> Europe, led by Germany, has emerged as the strongest market for Aboriginal tourism. German tourists are the most likely to travel to the Australian outback. While 35% of German tourists made a trip to the outback, only 5% of Japanese tourists visited the outback in 1999–2000. About 80% of German tourists 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that Australia offered very interesting cultural experiences. Visitors from European countries generally indicated a high level of interest and knowledge about Indigenous culture. In a recent survey of potential Chinese visitors, 39% expressed interest in Indigenous cultural products.[24]

Knowledge of Indigenous languages provides opportunities for Indigenous people to be employed as translators and interpreters. In December 2008, COAG committed $38.6 million towards interpreting and translating services as part of the Remote Service Delivery sites. The Remote Service Delivery National Partnership provides these funds for the COAG identified priority locations.[25]

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20 Savanna Explorer, North Australia Information Resource, *West Arnhem Land Fire Project West Arnhem Land Fire Abatement.* At http://www.savanna.org.au/al/fire_abatement.html (viewed 2 December 2008).

21 D Green, *Garnaut Climate Change Review, Climate impacts on the health of remote northern Australian Indigenous Communities*, 2008, p 8.

22 D Green, *Garnaut Climate Change Review, Climate impacts on the health of remote northern Australian Indigenous Communities,* 2008, p 14.

23 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year Book Australia 2004,* Number 86, ABS Catalogue No. 1301.0, 2004 p 582, At http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/17AAEE37C62CBBD5CA256E4600 7B2848/$File/13010_2004.pdf (viewed 3 September 2009).

24 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004 *Year Book Australia 2004,* Number 86, ABS Catalogue No. 1301.0, p 589. At http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/17AAEE37C62CBBD5CA256E4600 7B2848/$File/13010_2004.pdf (viewed 3 September 2009).

25 Council of Australian Governments, *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery*, *An agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the States and Territories, being: the State of New South Wales; the State of Queensland; the State of Western Australia; the State of South Australia; and the Northern Territory of Australia*. December 2008. At http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_ agreements/federal_financial_relations/docs/national_partnership/national_partnership_on_remote_ service_delivery_with_amended_schedule.pdf (viewed 6 July 2009).

(e)   Costs and compensation

The costs of language loss are inestimable. The costs for Indigenous people begin with simple economic costs associated with the loss of potential income. In remote and regional Australia, much of the Indigenous-specific employment is reliant on employees being able to speak Indigenous languages. Languages are the basis of employment in translating and interpreting, cultural knowledge industries and a range of Indigenous liaison positions aimed at facilitating community access to government services.

The next layer of cost associated with language loss is about broken relationships. The practice of removing children from their families and enforcing assimilation, meant that even when stolen children became adults, some were unable to communicate with their families because they did not speak the Indigenous languages spoken by their parents. The loss of language, the destruction of culture and the consequential fracturing of kinship structures has been associated with chronic addictions, community violence, broken families and suicide.[26] The costs of these losses is hard to estimate. They are personal and intergenerational for Indigenous peoples.

The cost of social infrastructure to support people who have lost their language and culture is one that is borne by governments. There is of course, no monetary value that can be put on language loss. Nevertheless, in recognition of the costs to Indigenous peoples, some countries have established healing funds and compensation programs. In 1998 the Canadian government issued a 'Statement of Reconciliation' and established an Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) with $350million in funding. This was in recognition of the cultural harm that was done by the Indian Residential Schools. The Canadian Government acknowledged the state's role in the implementation and running of the schools, and acknowledged the damage they caused to Aboriginal culture.[27]

(f)   Intrinsic value

There are numerous reasons and arguments to protect and promote Indigenous languages. Perhaps the most compelling argument is the value of Indigenous languages to the people who speak them. As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people we know we have a unique place in this country and we value our languages. They are precious to us, and there is a sense of loss amongst those of us who no longer speak our languages.

Parents and community members at Yirrkala in North East Arnhem Land described the value of their languages in these terms:

> It is unique – this language of ours – and we want to keep it strong. We know that language has been taken away from other people in this country and we don't want this to happen to us … [The Government] should see our language as our heritage and as a national treasure.[28]

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26   P Memmott, R Stacy, C Chambers, C Keys, Violence in Indigenous Communities, Report to Crime Prevention Branch of the Attorney-General's Department, Aboriginal Environments Research Centre, University of Queensland 2001, pp 11–18. At http://www.ag.gov.au/agd/www/rwpattach.nsf/viewas attachmentPersonal/(E24C1D4325451B61DE7F4F2B1E155715)~violenceindigenous.pdf/$file/ violenceindigenous.pdf (viewed 18 November 2009).

27   The Aboriginal Healing Foundation Canada, 'Frequently Asked Questions' website. At http://www.ahf.ca/ faqs (viewed 10 November 2009).

28   Yirrkala Action Group member, Meeting at Yirrkala CEC, 28 April 2009.

Phyllis Darcy, an Awabakal descendant in NSW described the place of language in Aboriginal life in the following terms:

> Language is very important to us; it is our connection to our ancestors and for those of us who still use our language can connect with the ancestors of the past. We belong to the land without the land we are nothing. Our life blood comes from the land and what is of the land. Language holds secrets to the connection of the land.[29]

In launching the International Year of Languages, the Director-General of UNESCO said:

> Languages are indeed essential to the identity of groups and individuals and to their peaceful coexistence. They constitute a strategic factor of progress towards sustainable development and a harmonious relationship between the global and the local context …
>
> UNESCO therefore invites governments, United Nations organizations, civil society organizations, educational institutions, professional associations and all other stake-holders to increase their own activities to foster respect for, and the promotion and protection of all languages, particularly endangered languages, in all individual and collective contexts.[30]

3.3 Australian policy and Indigenous languages

For the past two centuries, Australia has maintained and enforced a culture of monolingualism. While there is no policy which establishes English as Australia's official language, various factors have contributed to entrenching the dominance of English. In the early years of colonial life, the fiction of terra nullius was the basis on which the colonies established legal and governance institutions as extensions of the British Crown. English was the language that defined these institutions. In the following century, most Australian immigrants were English-speaking. The proportion who spoke Irish or Scots Gaelic was small and measures taken in World War 1 effectively ended the German-speaking community. The relative distance from Europe and then the emergence of the United States as a superpower in the twentieth century are factors which further entrenched English. More recently, the forces of global technologies have consolidated English as a language of preference for many Western nations.

Bilingualism has never been considered an advantage in itself in Australia. In recent years however, there have been some interesting changes in Australia's attitude to its geographic neighbours. The emergence of powerful economies in the Pacific have influenced language education in Australia. Languages from the Asia-Pacific are slowly finding their way into school curricula. The potential for economic partnerships has been the prime motivator for this shift in focus.

In June 2009, NSW Education Minister Verity Firth announced that bilingual education in Chinese is to be offered in NSW schools. Four-year funding of $2.25 million has been allocated to a program that is to commence in 2010. The Minister has been quoted as saying that 'the program was vital to the state's future economic and social prosperity'.[31]

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29   P Darcy, Aboriginal Languages Research and Resource Centre (The Languages Centre) website, New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs. At http://www.alrrc.nsw.gov.au/ (viewed 3 July 2009).

30   Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, United Nations website. At http://www.un.org/events/iyl/index.shtml (viewed 26 August 2009).

31   V Firth, 'Schools to offer Bilingual Education', *Brisbane Times Newspaper,* 15 June 2009. At http://news.brisbanetimes.com.au/breaking-news-national/nsw-schools-to-offer-bilingual-education-20090615-c82y.html (viewed 17 June 2009).

In his study, *Organizing for Multilingualism: Ecological and Sociological Perspectives,* Joseph Lo Bianco outlines the reasons why some languages are particularly fragile in globalising economies, while other languages are strengthened.

> Today, with economic globalisation, the 'widening, deepening and speeding up of world wide interconnectedness' … population mobility, and information/ communication technologies that produce instantaneous links across great distances, there is great stress on communication, and far less on diversity. As a result some kinds of bilingualism have become strong, additive and materially rewarded, whereas other kinds of bilingualism have become fragile, unstable and fading. The kinds of bilingualism that have become strong and attractive tend to be those that involve the addition of instrumentally useful languages, especially but not only English, to uncontested national languages of secure national states.
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> … [T]he type of bilingualism that has been rendered unstable has been that of minority populations, including the languages of sub-national communities in these states, such as non-Han populations in China, indigenous peoples in Brazil, Australia, the United States and elsewhere …[32]

Joseph Lo Bianco goes on to describe the ways in which the dominant languages are strengthened and perpetuated; primarily through the power structures of nation states and through the powerful information technologies of the media.

> These languages are used in education, the media, business and commerce, international contexts etc, and therefore they have more rewards and more power than other languages.[33]

We know that Indigenous languages do not have a place of power in Australia. Indigenous languages are rarely, if ever, the means of communication with governments, industry or the non-Indigenous community. For example, negotiations about mining on Aboriginal land are usually conducted in English with (or often without) interpreting or translations for Aboriginal people. English continues to be the language of transaction in health services, in education, in negotiations about infrastructure development and industry development on Indigenous peoples' land. English is the preferred language even in situations that are exclusively concerned with Indigenous interests such as Native Title negotiations.

While the majority of the mainstream English-speaking population may not recognise benefits in speaking Indigenous languages, there are distinct economic advantages for Indigenous people who speak their own languages. Bilingualism or multilingualism enhances employment opportunities where cultural knowledge is required. Indigenous languages and cultural knowledge can provide employment advantages in land management and preservation, cultural tourism and the arts, translator and interpreter services and cultural knowledge industries. Governments and policy-makers must be mindful of the opportunities that Indigenous languages bestow. Economic analyses of the opportunities and the costs of language policies including English-only policies should be carefully considered so they do not disadvantage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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32   J Lo Bianco, 'Organizing for Multilingualism: Ecological and Sociological Perspectives', Conference Paper, *TESOL Symposium, Keeping Language Diversity Alive*, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia, July 9, 2008, p 1.

33   J Lo Bianco, 'Organizing for Multilingualism: Ecological and Sociological Perspectives', Conference Paper, *TESOL Symposium, Keeping Language Diversity Alive*, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia, July 9, 2008, p 1.

(a) Commonwealth Government policy

Until August 2009, Australia did not have a stand-alone Indigenous languages policy at the national level. Some earlier policies made reference to Indigenous languages in broader Australian language and literacy policies.[34]

In August 2009, the Minister for the Arts and the Minister for Indigenous Affairs announced the first national policy exclusively focussed on Indigenous languages: *Indigenous Languages – A National Approach 2009*.[35] The stated aims of the policy are to 'improve coordination between those who are already working to support Indigenous languages including government, cultural institutions, Indigenous languages organisations, and education and research bodies.'[36] Activity is to be focussed in five areas:

1. Bringing national attention to Indigenous languages
2. Encouraging the use of critically endangered languages to maintain and extend their everyday use as much as possible
3. Making sure that in areas where Indigenous languages are being spoken fully and passed on, government recognises these languages when it interacts with Indigenous communities

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34   Previous to 2009, the first Commonwealth policy to have any impact on Indigenous languages was the National Languages Policy of 1987. The National Languages Policy covered all language activity in Australia, included policy specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. It recommended the development of a program of support for Aboriginal languages, the National Aboriginal Languages Project (NALP). NALP provided supplementary funding for Aboriginal language education to State/Territory and non government education authorities or school communities for projects. This policy had its greatest impact on community-based Indigenous language programs because this is where the Commonwealth could direct resources.

The National Languages Policy of 1987 was followed by the Australian Language and Literacy Policy of 1991. Indigenous languages were one component of this broader languages policy. The section specific to Indigenous languages provided that:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages should be maintained and developed where they are still transmitted. Other languages should be assisted in an appropriate way, for example through recording. These activities should only occur where the speakers so desire and in consultation with their community, for the benefit of the descendants of their speakers and for the nation's heritage.

The Commonwealth's policy is to preserve, protect and promote the rights and freedom of indigenous Australians to use and develop indigenous Australian languages. The use of indigenous languages as accredited vehicles of instruction is encouraged where possible, in order to develop and support:

- the survival of indigenous Australian languages;
- educational opportunity;
- increased student success and performance;
- increased student awareness and knowledge of their culture and history; and
- increased student and community pride.

The Language and Literacy Policy 1991 provided recurrent funding for Regional Aboriginal Language Centres. This was an important measure to supplement existing Aboriginal language centres and other organisations. It was from this policy that funds were made available to establish the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages (FATSIL). FATSIL is the national peak body for community based Indigenous language programs in Australia. The policy also placed an emphasis on school-based educational programs. The extent to which schools followed the national policy was dependent on the interest and resources of local school administrations.

35   Australian Government Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, *Indigenous Languages – A National Approach. The importance of Australia's Indigenous languages*. At http://www.arts.gov.au/indigenous/languages_policy (viewed 3 September 2009).

36   The Hon Peter Garrett, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Minister for the Environment, The Hon Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Media Release, *New National Approach to preserve Indigenous languages,* FaHCSIA website. At http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/preserve_indigenous_languages_10aug09.htm (viewed 3 September 2009).

4. Helping restore the use of rarely spoken or unspoken Indigenous languages to the extent that the current language environment allows

5. Supporting the teaching and learning of Indigenous languages in Australian schools.[37]

The centrepiece of Indigenous language **funding** in Australia is the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records (MILR) program administered through the Department of Environment Heritage and the Arts.[38] The MILR program funds a range of organisations to develop language databases, resources and programs through a grants application process. This program has been in operation for a number of years and is now the sole source of funding for the Commonwealth's new National Approach. No new money has been added to the MILR to meet the new obligations of the National Approach. The allocation of $9.3 million to MILR for 2009–10 was committed *prior* to the National Approach. This means that the Commonwealth has been unable to be responsive to situations that are new obligations. For example, the recent abolition of bilingual education funding by the Northern Territory Government now requires the attention of the Commonwealth Government if it is to implement the fifth element of its National Approach which is: "*supporting the teaching and learning of Indigenous languages in Australian schools*?"[39]

Unless there is new money and mechanisms to regulate state and territory Indigenous languages policy, it is unlikely that the National Approach will change the status quo and reverse the language decline. The National Approach has so far been impotent in directing the states and territories to comply with its objectives. For example, the National Approach has not changed the education policy of the Northern Territory which aims to dismantle Indigenous bilingual education.

The divide between Commonwealth, state and territory policy is a large obstacle in the implementation of coherent direction in areas such as education. Cooperative federalism is a worthy aspiration, though it is rarely a straightforward process and it is often reliant on Commonwealth funding incentives and COAG agreements.

(b)   State and territory Indigenous languages policy

Indigenous language policies at the state and territory level are usually embedded in education or arts policies, and relevant only to those portfolios. NSW is the only jurisdiction to have a stand-alone Indigenous languages policy. It is administered through the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy has influence on the activity of a range of NSW departmental portfolio areas, including education and justice.

37   The Hon Peter Garrett, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Minister for the Environment, The Hon Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Media Release, *New National Approach to preserve Indigenous languages*, FaHCSIA website. At http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/preserve_indigenous_languages_10aug09.htm (viewed 3 September 2009).

38   The Hon Peter Garrett, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Minister for the Environment, The Hon Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Media Release, *New National Approach to preserve Indigenous languages*, FaHCSIA website. At http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/preserve_indigenous_languages_10aug09.htm (viewed 3 September 2009).

39   The Hon Peter Garrett, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Minister for the Environment, The Hon Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Media Release, *New National Approach to preserve Indigenous languages*, FaHCSIA website. At http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/preserve_indigenous_languages_10aug09.htm (viewed 3 September 2009).

When Indigenous languages policies are compared across jurisdictions it is clear that there are some contradictions between Commonwealth and state and territory policy positions. There is also considerable variation between the states and territories in their commitment to Indigenous languages as represented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Commonwealth, state and territory government policies with impact on Indigenous languages

	Indigenous language policy	Year	Impact
Commonwealth Government	Indigenous Languages – A National Approach. The importance of Australia's Indigenous languages	August 2009	The *Indigenous Languages – A National Approach* policy supports the preservation of Indigenous languages by raising the profile of Indigenous languages and supporting education initiatives. Funding is available through the *Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records program*. $8.8 million was allocated in 2008–09. This policy has no direct impact on policy direction in the states and territories.
Northern Territory	Compulsory teaching in English for the first four hours of each school day. Indigenous Education Strategic Plan 2006–2009	January 2009 2006	The *Compulsory teaching in English for the first four hours of each school day* policy negatively impacts on bilingual programs – preventing schools from following bilingual education models. Indigenous languages can only be taught in the afternoon. The majority of the NT schools have some form of Indigenous culture program and many have language programs including LOTE focussed programs. The *Indigenous Education Strategic Plan* lists the teaching of Indigenous language at Priority 3 and English literacy at Priority 1. Language Centres provide resources to communities including schools. An Aboriginal Interpreter service operates throughout the NT.

Table 3.1: Commonwealth, state and territory government policies with impact on Indigenous languages (continued)			
	Indigenous language policy	**Year**	**Impact**
Queensland	Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools	2005	The *Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools* policy advises that schools may provide Indigenous language maintenance or revitalisation programs at their own discretion. The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Policy 2009–2013* aims to support communities in the revival, reclamation and maintenance of Indigenous languages through the arts industries.
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Policy 2009–2013	2009	
	State Library of Queensland Indigenous Languages Strategy	2007	Queensland Indigenous Languages Advisory Committee has been a principal advocate for a state-wide policy. The *State Library of Queensland Indigenous Languages Strategy* supports language revival, reclamation and maintenance through the provision of language information and resources.
Western Australia	*Languages Services Policy*	2008	The *Languages Services* policy impacts on translator and interpreter services. It does not have impact on language education. Other language activity in WA occurs through federally funded language resource centres, Indigenous corporations or research centres. Indigenous languages are taught in some schools as a LOTE and at the discretion of school administrations. A Draft Languages Policy 2007 has not been released since the change of government in WA in September 2008.
Australian Capital Territory	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy 1997	1997	The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy 1997* contains a statement of purpose: 'to address the issue of maintenance and development of indigenous languages' through school education. However there are no dictionaries and no Ngunawal speakers in the ACT and so school activity has been limited to culture programs.

Table 3.1: Commonwealth, state and territory government policies with impact on Indigenous languages (continued)

	Indigenous language policy	Year	Impact
Victoria	No Indigenous languages policy		The Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages coordinates and assists in the development of language programs including the development of dictionaries and school and community education programs. http://www.vaclang.org.au/language-program.aspx?ID=10
South Australia	*Languages Statement 2007–2011*		The *Languages Statement 2007–2011* promotes the teaching of Indigenous languages at the school, district and State Office level. Languages are taught at the discretion of school administrations and most often with a LOTE focus. The SA Government is reviewing the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988* for future heritage protection and management. The Review Scoping Paper contemplates a broad definition of heritage.
New South Wales	NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy	2004	The *NSW Aboriginal Languages Policy* is a state-wide policy with impacts in the following areas: Programs in Aboriginal communities Language programs in the educational system Language programs in gaols and detention centres Aboriginal languages in the broader community The Aboriginal Languages Research and Resource Centre in the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs support the preservation and revival of the State's 70 languages through a $200,000 annual grants program http://www.alrrc.nsw.gov.au/ The NSW school syllabus provides that students can learn a language from kindergarten through to year 10.

Table 3.1: Commonwealth, state and territory government policies with impact on Indigenous languages (continued)			
	Indigenous language policy	**Year**	**Impact**
Tasmania	No Indigenous languages policy		Some language retrieval is managed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and provided to local communities. No Aboriginal language revitalisation is occurring in Tasmanian schools

Advocates of Indigenous language preservation have long argued for a combined national, state and territory approach to Indigenous languages; one which is not limited by state and territory borders.

(c)   Funding and resources for Indigenous languages

Commonwealth, state and territory governments fund various Indigenous language initiatives designed to promote, protect, revive and maintain Indigenous languages. However, when considered in total, the Indigenous language resource picture in Australia is inconsistent and complex. Language preservation initiatives are resourced from different government portfolio areas across the different levels of government. Many of the existing Indigenous language initiatives are funded through grants on short-term funding cycles.

Australia lacks a coordinated approach to guide practice in Indigenous language maintenance and revitalisation activity and this means that there is no framework for quality control. Governments and other project funding bodies do not have nationally agreed measures against which to assess the benefits and impacts of individual projects.

The lack of coordination means that there are lost opportunities for efficiencies in resource sharing, and a lack of expertise about whether the appropriate approaches are being applied to meet the requirements of each language situation. There is no single organisation in Australia that has its eye on the big picture and can apply expertise to a complex language environment. The *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005* explains that different language situations need different approaches. It cautions that there needs to be 'some kind of general scheme for matching programs to situations.'[40] Not all approaches will work in all situations, and sometimes good programs are shelved because they have been applied in the wrong settings.

It is difficult to make assessments about the different language situations without reliable research. It is also difficult to assess the resource situation in Australia without comprehensive mapping at the Commonwealth, state and territory levels and across the government portfolio areas. Indigenous languages funding could be embedded in school programs, early childhood centres, vocational and training institutions, universities and justice environments.

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40   Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages*, National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005*, p 25. At http://www.arts.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/35637/nils-report-2005.pdf (viewed 3 July 2009).

At the Commonwealth level we know that the majority of funds from the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records (MILR) program go to regional Indigenous language centres, research centres or community groups.[41] In the 2008–09 funding round for MILR, there were 104 applications seeking more than $18 million in funds. Sixty six projects were funded by the Commonwealth at an expenditure of $8.8 million.[42] When the new National Approach to Indigenous languages was announced in August 2009, the Australian Government had already committed $9.3 million to support 65 programs through the MILR for the 2009–10 financial year.[43] This is the money which has been dedicated to support the New Approach. There are no new funds to accompany the policy announcement. A breakdown of the MILR funding for 2008–09 and 2009–10 are at Appendices B and C respectively.

A breakdown of the MILR funds shows that money does not go to schools where children are still speaking languages. For example, no funding goes to the Alyawarre, Anmatyerre, Warlpiri, Tiwi, or Anindilyakwa language groups where children are still speaking their languages. Many of these communities have lost funding since the abolition of bilingual education by the Northern Territory Government.

The MILR Funding allocations range from $10,000 to $450,000 grants. Many language projects and resource centres attempt to obtain supplementary funds from state and territory governments or from philanthropic groups. This is not always successful. In some instances language and culture activity has been funded by mining companies as part of land use agreements or royalty agreements such as the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT) which was set up as a result of an agreement between the Central Land Council and Tanami gold miner Newmont Mining.[44]

The grant-based nature of the MILR program means that organisations with capacity to apply for funds are the ones that are in the best position to acquire resources. Language grants are dependent on localised advocacy and not necessarily on a careful assessment of the language requirements in a particular area. The Kimberley Language Resource Centre argues that there is not enough focus and resourcing for 'teaching on country' in the Kimberley region, where Aboriginal language speakers carry out a unique role of teaching and transmitting their languages in their communities.

The need for language transmission from the older generations to the younger generations is a finding from the *Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey*. It finds that older carers play an essential role in transferring language to the next generations. However, success is dependent upon creating opportunities for older and younger generations to interact in structured learning environments.

41   The Hon Peter Garrett, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Minister for the Environment, The Hon Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Media Release, *New national approach to preserve Indigenous languages*, FaHCSIA website. At http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/jennymacklin.nsf/content/preserve_indigenous_languages_10aug09.htm (viewed 3 September 2009).

42   Australian Government Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, *Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records program 2008–09*. At http://www.arts.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/82336/milr-funding-2008-09.pdf (viewed 19 June 2009).

43   Australian Government Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, *Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records program 2009–10*. At http://www.arts.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/89439/milr-funding-0910-28july09.pdf (viewed 28 August 2009).

44   Central Land Council website, Warlpiri Education and Training Trust. At http://www.clc.org.au/Building_the_bush/wett.html (viewed 27 August 2009).

> The rate of loss of traditional Aboriginal language from one generation to the next can be gauged by comparing the distribution of carers and children who are conversant in an Aboriginal language. This is highly dependent on the degree of relative isolation (remoteness) and the extent to which there have been systematic initiatives to preserve and recover traditional languages (e.g. Kimberley Aboriginal Language Resource Centre) or where there are local opportunities for bilingual or traditional first language education (e.g. several Western Australian Aboriginal Independent Community Schools have developed strategies which use the children's traditional language and culture as a bridge to developing competence in Standard Australian English).[45]

The findings of the *Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey* indicate that the Kimberley region would benefit from 'language nests'. Language nests are pre-schools or crèches that are run by local Indigenous language speakers. Children attending the language nests are immersed in the local language and culture. Establishing language nests requires the coordination of policy and resources over a number of portfolio areas across the state, territory and Commonwealth governments. Language nests require complementary policy in the areas of early childhood services, employment services for Indigenous language speakers, training for elders and community members if required, and possibly infrastructure development resourcing. Initiating this activity goes well beyond applying for a grant from the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records (MILR) program.

The Kimberley is one of very few places to trial the language nest approach in the Bunuba community. However due to the lack of an effective resource and information sharing body, no other language group or community has been able to benefit from an evaluation of this trial. The new National Approach endorses language nests but there is no money for any implementation and no plan to role out a national trial as recommended by the NILS report.

As this example in the Kimberley demonstrates, there is sometimes a disjunction between the language requirements of an Indigenous community and the available services and resources in the area. This problem is replicated across Australia.

3.4 Australian and international approaches aimed at protecting and promoting Indigenous languages

(a) Strategic approaches to preserve Indigenous languages

There are numerous ways to improve the situation of Indigenous languages in Australia. However, the reach of any initiative will be limited if it is not part of an overarching strategic direction. Commitment at the highest levels of government is required to ensure consistency in action and direction. It is the strategic approaches that set direction for programmatic responses and the targeting of resources. The new National Approach to Indigenous Languages is the beginning of a strategic response for this country.

Australia's Indigenous languages situation has many unique features which distinguish it from other countries. Nevertheless, there is much we can learn from the international experience. To a large extent, the actions that are required to preserve minority languages are analogous the world over.

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45   Kulunga Research Network, *Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey,* Chapter 2, Characteristics of the population, p 33. At http://www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/files/user17/Volume1_Chapter2.pdf (viewed 4 April 2009).

Internationally, language movements have been shown to be successful when they become a national responsibility. Language movements in North Africa for example, led to legal and constitutional recognition of the Amazigh language in Algeria in 1996. The movement for the Amazigh language in Morocco led to the establishment of Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture in 2001. These actions have had practical language promotion outcomes for these two countries. They have led to new language policy including:

- The adoption of TIFINNAGH (Amazigh writing) and standardization in M/ Latin and Arabic in Algeria
- Amazigh language for all Moroccan children and for all levels progressively since 2003–2004/ in some regions in Algeria
- Didactics materials in Amazigh language
- Training programs for teachers
- A new dynamic with mother language in schools in both countries.[46]

(i)   Constitutional recognition

In Australia, constitutional recognition of Indigenous languages and culture could take two possible forms. A statement in the preamble could describe the place of Indigenous language and culture in Australian society, though it would have no legal or enforceable status. The Constitution of the state of Victoria makes reference to the unique status of Indigenous Australians as the first peoples, though this has no bearing on the language rights of Indigenous Victorians.

A provision in the body of the Australian Constitution would provide legal recognition of Indigenous languages. Ecuador has a provision of this nature in its Constitution. Ecuador recognises Indigenous languages alongside Castilian which is the official language of use.

> Castilian is the official language of Ecuador; Castilian, Kichwa and Shuar are official languages of intercultural relations. The remaining ancestral languages are in official use by the indigenous peoples in the areas that they inhabit according to the terms established by law. The state will respect and encourage their use.[47]

Removal of the races power and the addition of an equality clause or a non-discrimination clause are additional changes that need to be made to Australia's Constitution to ensure the full and consistent protection of Indigenous peoples' language rights.

Other countries have acted to protect Indigenous languages through statutory law. For example, the *Māori Language Act 1987* is the centrepiece legislation which gives Māori language official status in New Zealand. New Zealand has three official languages; Maori, English and New Zealand Sign Language. Because Te Reo Maori has official language status, speakers have a right to use it in legal settings such as in court and to conduct their business with Government in the language.

Many places in New Zealand have both Māori and English names and local governments and other public institutions display all information in bilingual formats. Schools also reflect the diversity of language. The New Zealand Ministry of Education

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46   H Id Balkassm, Legal and constitutional status of Amazigh language in Morocco & North Africa. Presentation to International Expert Group Meeting on indigenous languages, 8–10 January 2008, United Nations, New York. At www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/.../EGM_IL_Balkassm_en.ppt (viewed 11 June 2009).

47   Constitution of Ecuador, Chapter One: Fundamental Principles, art 2.

supports both Māori-medium and English-medium education. In Māori-medium schools, Te Reo Māori is the language of instruction. In English-medium schools, Māori language is an official part of the curriculum. Section 61 of New Zealand's *Education Act 1989* requires that English-medium schools to take all reasonable steps to provide Te Reo Māori to students when parents ask for it.[48]

The following case study of the Māori Language Commission demonstrates what is possible when language preservation is guided by national laws and institutions aimed at achieving a common purpose. While Australia has more than one hundred spoken languages compared with the single Indigenous language in New Zealand, the actions and initiatives of this country have potential application in the Australian context.

Case Study 3.1: The Māori Language Commission

The Māori Language Commission is able to exercise quality control over all areas of Māori language policy, funding, program standards and research projects. Since it was introduced in 1987 there has been a steady increase in Māori language activity. The Māori Language Commission was set up under the *Māori Language Act 1987* to promote the use of Māori as a living language and as an ordinary means of communication. The *Māori Language Act 1987* does three things:

- It declares the Māori Language to be an official language of New Zealand.
- In Courts of Law, Commissions of Inquiry and Tribunals, it confers the right to speak Māori to any member of the Court, any party, witness or counsel.
- It establishes the Māori Language Commission.[49]

The operations of the Māori Language Commission are divided into six areas which are complementary and interconnected. The Commission carries out the following functions:

(i) Lexicography, Terminology and Research: developing the first monolingual Māori dictionary – and establishing and maintaining a lexical database.

(ii) Māori Language Development and Standards: developing language standards, for quality assurance, and training and certifying translators and interpreters.

(iii) Māori Language Community Initiatives: distributing funding to support community-based Māori language initiatives.

(iv) Promotions: promotion and communication about Māori language activity.

(v) Policy: providing advice to the Minister, State Sector agencies and educational institutes.

(vi) Finance and Administration: financial management and general administrative support for the office.

The Commission meets at least six times a year. The secretariat is headed by a Chief Executive which carries out research, policy advice, translation checking work, promotional activities, and tasks assigned by Commission members.[50]

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48 *Education Act 1989*, New Zealand, s 61.
49 The Māori Language Commission website. At http://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/english/about_e/ (viewed 23 September 2009).
50 The Māori Language Commission website. At http://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/english/about_e/ (viewed 22 September 2009).

In recent years the New Zealand Government has monitored the uptake of Māori language through national language surveys. The survey data shows a steady increase in the numbers of people learning the language.

> Following both the 2001 and 2006 Census, surveys were undertaken of the Māori population aged 15 years-old and over, looking at the health of the Māori language. Both surveys included self-assessment of three components of language proficiency, namely: speaking, reading and writing, with the 2001 survey also assessing listening.

> The 2006 Survey on the Health of the Māori Language found that 22.8% of the Māori population aged 15 and over were proficient in reading Māori (that is, they could read 'well' or 'very well'), a significant increase from the figure in 2001 (13.2%). The 2006 survey found that 16.8% and 14.0% of the Māori adults were proficient in writing and speaking Māori, compared with 11.6% and 9.8% respectively from the 2001 Census. The increase in proficiency levels from the 2001 Census was most marked for those aged 25 to 34 years-old.[51]

Figure 3.1: Age-standardised percentage of Māori population proficient in Te Reo (2001 and 2006)
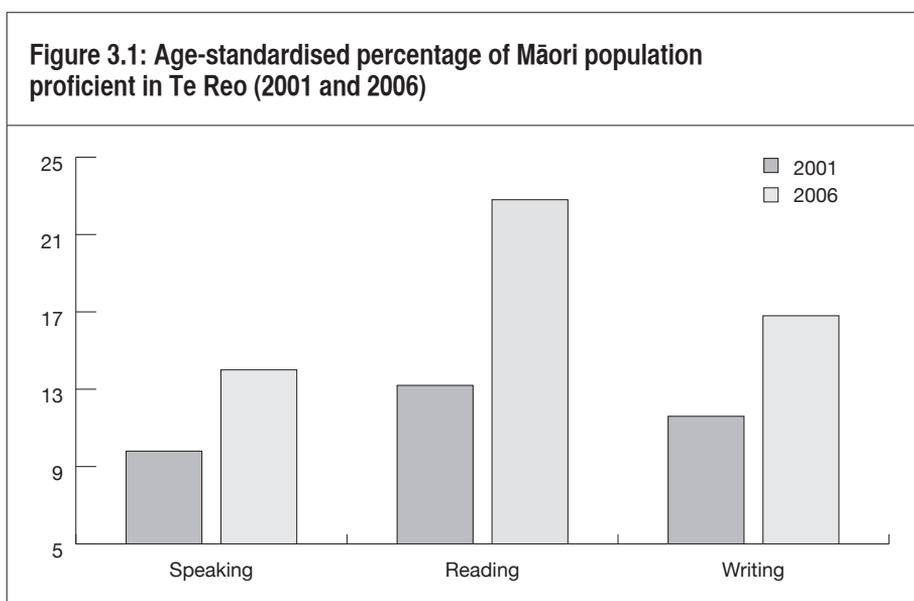
Source: Language Counts, Percentage of Māori population proficient in te reo Māori website.
At http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/indicators/education_and_learning_outcomes/literacy/1887.

New Zealand has had a long tradition of celebrating it Indigenous language. Te Reo has been celebrated annually for over 30 years during Māori Language Week.

New Zealand is not alone developing nation-wide organisations to promote and preserve Indigenous languages. The following case study of the Greenland Language Secretariat describes a national body that provides advice to parliament and guidance to language authorities throughout Greenland.

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51   Language Counts, Percentage of Māori population proficient in te reo Māori website. At http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/indicators/education_and_learning_outcomes/literacy/1887 (viewed 12 September 2009).

Case Study 3.2: The Greenland Language Secretariat, Oqaasileriffik

Greenland recently developed a national secretariat to develop normative or standardized usage of the Indigenous language in the contexts of education, communication and legislation. The Greenland Language Secretariat, Oqaasileriffik is largely credited with saving and promoting the language as the official tongue.

In 2009, the most prominent Indigenous language dialect of Greenland, Kalaallisut, was made the sole official language. The name Kalaallisut is now often used as a cover term for all of Greenlandic language. Before June 2009, Greenlandic shared its status as the official language in Greenland with Danish.

Oqaasileriffik is an independent Greenlandic institution under the Ministry of Culture, Education, Research and Church with responsibility to report to the Minister. Oqaasileriffik's main objectives include:

- to collect and maintain information on Greenlandic language and language usage
- to participate in Nordic Boards and working groups in language matters and to join the ICC Language Board
- to stay updated on changes in the spoken Greenlandic language
- to carry out research on Greenlandic as a second language[52]

Oqaasileriffik is the secretariat for the following Parliamentary Committees:

The Greenland Language Committee

The Greenland Place Names Authority

The Committee for Personal Names

The Parliamentary Committees report to the Greenland Cabinet every year. They also have responsibility to give guidance to Greenland authorities and the public on questions related to the Greenlandic language.[53]

(ii)   A national language authority for Australia

While the current language situation in Australia is considerably different to New Zealand and Greenland, there is much we can learn from their actions.

Indigenous language activity in Australia currently lacks focus and quality control. There is no doubt that a national organisation would significantly assist Australia's language situation. A national organisation could monitor Indigenous languages across Australia, assist in the distribution of appropriate funds and resources and set the direction for the preservation and revitalisation of Indigenous languages. Ideally, such a body would bring together the considerable language expertise in this country.

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52   Oqaasileriffik – the Greenland Language Secretariat website. At http://www.oqaasileriffik.gl/content/us (viewed 13 September 2009).

53   Oqaasiliortut – the Greenland Language Council website. At http://www.oqaasileriffik.gl/content/us/ oqaasiliortut_-_the_greenland_language_council (viewed 12 September 2009).

In 2005 the *National Indigenous Survey Report 2005* argued for the establishment of a National Indigenous Languages Centre.[54] The Survey Report put the case that a feasibility study will be required to evaluate the merits of establishing this body. As its first listed action to implement the new National Approach to Indigenous Languages, the Australian Government agreed to conduct this study.[55] Three months on, there is no indication that any action has begun to assess the feasibility of a national Indigenous languages body. It is essential that this activity begin immediately for the fast disappearing Indigenous languages in Australia.

A large challenge for any national body in Australia is the interaction with the states and territories. The divide between the Commonwealth, state and territory government functions limits the impact that a national body can have at the implementation level or the program level. The implementation of national policy is reliant on the buy-in of the states and territories as well as the capacity of the different levels of government to resource and mobilise people at local and community levels.

(iii)   A national curriculum for Australian schools

A future mechanism that will have impact on primary and secondary schools is the national curriculum which is being developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. The Commonwealth Government assures that:

> Indigenous perspectives will be written into the National Curriculum to ensure that all young Australians have the opportunity to learn about, acknowledge and respect the language and culture of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.[56]

'Indigenous perspectives' is one of three cross curricula dimensions to be integrated across all areas of Australian school curricula. Indigenous perspectives aim to give students the opportunity to learn about the history, culture, language and social context of Indigenous Australians through maths, science, English and history. This cross curricula dimension will provide good contextual information about Indigenous Australia, though it is not indigenous language studies.

The national curriculum is currently a work in progress. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority expects to complete the first phase of curriculum development for English, mathematics, the sciences and history by September 2010. A second phase will then develop curricula for geography and languages other than English (LOTE).[57]

Language studies will give students an opportunity to learn Indigenous languages as a LOTE *if* teachers have Indigenous language skills and the language resources exist in the school. Finding trained Indigenous language teachers will be especially difficult in urban areas. However, with appropriate resources, Indigenous languages will be available through the national curriculum as LOTE studies in much the same

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54   Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages, *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005*, p 116. At http://www.arts.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/35637/nils-report-2005.pdf (viewed 3 July 2009).

55   Australian Government Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Indigenous Languages – A National Approach, The importance of Australia's Indigenous languages, Australian Government website. At http://www.arts.gov.au/indigenous/languages_policy (viewed 12 September 2009).

56   Australian Government Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Indigenous Languages – A National Approach, The importance of Australia's Indigenous languages, Australian Government website. At http://www.arts.gov.au/indigenous/languages_policy (viewed 12 September 2009).

57   National Curriculum Board, National Curriculum Development Paper, 2008, p 2. At http://www.acara.edu.au/verve/_resources/development_paper.pdf#xml=http://search.curriculum.edu.au/texis/search/pdfhi.txt?query=second+phase&pr=www.acara.edu.au&prox=page&rorder=500&rprox=500&rdfreq=500&rwfreq=500&rlead=500&rdepth=0&sufs=0&order=r&cq=&id=4ae7fa3a14 (viewed 29 September 2009).

way as one might learn French or Japanese. This will suit students wanting to learn an Indigenous language or to revive their local language.

The LOTE approach to language learning is very different from bilingual education. A LOTE can be described as a discrete language subject whereas bilingual education is a methodological approach to learning across all subject areas in the early years of schooling.

In Australia, bilingual approaches are used in contexts where Indigenous students speak an Indigenous language as their mother tongue. In these schools the Indigenous language is the language of instruction in the early years of schooling and English is progressively introduced with each successive year. By the end of primary school, students are learning predominantly in English. Bilingual education is, in fact, an English literacy approach as well as a method for teaching literacy in the child's first language.

There will be some distinct challenges for schools wanting to follow bilingual education approaches under the national curriculum. While the national curriculum may not preclude bilingual approaches, governments will need to make provision for the development of literacy materials in Indigenous languages. In addition, bilingual schools require a specific staffing formula so that teachers proficient in Indigenous languages and English are available to deliver the learning program. Unfortunately, the Northern Territory Government has shown that it is not prepared to fund bilingual approaches in 2009. This means that the bilingual approaches, which are language maintenance programs where Indigenous languages are strong, will not be able to function in future without some form of funding.

There are many questions about the future of Indigenous language learning in Australian schools. How can a national strategy and curriculum framework ensure that language resources are available, sustainable and appropriate in the areas where they are best applied? How can we be sure that state education departments will assist schools to provide Indigenous language studies? Will language studies be contingent upon the interest of school principals and the availability of resources in the local area? Will teacher training colleges provide courses and support some of the specific learning needs of Indigenous language teachers? Will the national curriculum framework support the bilingual teaching methodology and will it fund bilingual schools to the level required?

A series of complex interconnected actions are required to ensure that appropriate Indigenous language resources find their way into Australian schools.

(iv)   Consistent action across Commonwealth, state and territory governments

One way that the Commonwealth can influence state and territory policy and service delivery is through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreements. In fact COAG agreements are increasingly becoming the strategy through which all Australian governments cooperate on national agendas.

Another way that the Commonwealth can exercise significant control over the states and territories is through tied grants. The Commonwealth Parliament has a vastly larger budget than the states and territories and less responsibility for implementation of services. By using its power to make grants to states with conditions, the Commonwealth is able to exercise significant influence over state and territory governments in many portfolio areas. The Commonwealth is also a source of significant infrastructure expenditure from its own separate programs. Importantly, the Commonwealth has specific responsibilities for Indigenous programs and funding.

Tied grants have been used by the Commonwealth Government to influence state policy on matters such as Indigenous education in schools. For example, in 2008–09 the Northern Territory Government received approximately $18.1 million for special Indigenous education purposes.[58] Tied grants are commonly monitored by setting goals and targets to be achieved by agreed timelines. The Commonwealth monitors the outcomes of tied grants through various measures such as national reporting of student performance on literacy and numeracy tests.

The complex challenge to preserve and revive Indigenous languages will require the following coordinated action as a minimum:

- an overarching agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories on key principles and a framework for Indigenous languages
- the negotiation of bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and each state and territory with tied grants attached
- the development of priorities, goals, measures and targets for outcomes in service delivery performance, and in the increase of Indigenous people with access to first language resources and learning. Ultimately, the success of the agreements will have to be measured by targets of Indigenous language speakers over time.

(b)   Programmatic approaches to preserve Indigenous languages

Programmatic responses are as important as strategic responses because it is at the program level that the real language work occurs. Not all Indigenous languages are at the same level of use and of fluency across the generations of speakers. In some places in Australia, Indigenous languages are spoken by all generations, including the old and the young people; and in other places it is only the older people who are the full language speakers. Different language preservation actions are required for different situations. If the languages are not spoken by the youngest generation, the children; then the task is **language reclamation and revitalisation**. If the languages are spoken by children, then there are two tasks; to ensure that the children have the opportunity to develop their mother tongue to the fullest extent (**language maintenance**); and to ensure that they receive good quality English teaching which does not seek to replace their traditional language, but rather to add another language (**additive bilingual education**).

Approximately two thirds of specific language MILR funding goes to language reclamation and revitalisation and about a third goes to language maintenance. Addressing language situations is not a simple proportionate equation whereby the worst language situations require the greatest resource allocations and visa versa. A full range of programmatic responses is required if Indigenous languages are to be preserved in Australia. The case study examples in this chapter represent a sample of Indigenous language activity under different categories of action. They are:

i.   Literacy materials for learning in first languages: The *First Language Program* of the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation

ii. Drama, music and art programs in schools and communities: *The Music Outback program* of the Music Outback Foundation and *Ngapartji Ngapartji* of Big hART

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58   P Yu, ME Duncan, B Gray, *Report of the NTER Review Board – October 2008, Chapter 3 – Sustainability and the way ahead*. At http://www.nterreview.gov.au/docs/report_nter_review/ch3.htm (viewed 16 September 2009).

iii. Mentoring programs: *The tuakana-teina (language mentoring) project* of the Māori Language Commission

iv. Using technology to bring the knowledge of Indigenous experts to tertiary education settings: *Teaching from Country* Charles Darwin University

v. Bilingual education: Bilingual education in the Northern Territory

vi. Language nests and language immersion: Aha Pūnana Leo, Language Nest Preschools in Hawai'i

vii. Regional language resource centres: Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre

viii. Tertiary education programs for future Indigenous language teachers: Certificate course and higher education degrees in Indigenous language studies

ix. Secondary education: Embedding Indigenous language studies into state and territory curriculum frameworks

Literacy materials for learning in first languages

Educators in schools and other settings need access to quality teaching materials in whatever subject they are teaching. While English literacy learning materials are abundant in Australia, texts and learning materials in Indigenous languages are not. Developing reading, maths and history resources in Indigenous languages requires the direct input of Indigenous language speakers as well as publishing facilities. In Australia some excellent work has been done to preserve languages through picture dictionaries and classroom learning materials and readers.

IAD Press is Australia's national Indigenous publishing house based at the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD) in Alice Springs. The purpose of the Press is to:

- publish the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers and illustrators
- promote the many and varied voices of Indigenous Australia
- maintain and promote Indigenous languages and culture

IAD Press has been producing quality publications for more than 30 years. Linguists working in Alice Springs have developed picture dictionaries and electronic templates for language learning in ten Indigenous languages so far. The picture dictionaries have been developed by linguists working with groups of Indigenous language speakers. Vocabulary is accompanied by pictures and good illustrative sentences. The picture dictionaries have been used for a range of language activities in schools as well as providing a learning resource for adult learners.

Literature Production Centres in bilingual schools have also been publishers of language materials in the local languages. Literature production Centres develop readers for schools children as well as classroom learning materials across all of the curriculum areas. For example, Yuendumu Community Education Centre has more than 100 titles of readers and resources for use in classrooms.[59] However the defunding of bilingual education has had direct implications for Literature Production Centres. These materials will no longer be produced with the support of Northern Territory Government funding.

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59 Warlpiri vernacular literature website. At http://www.anu.edu.au/linguistics/nash/aust/wlp/wlp-lit.html (viewed 30 September 2009).

The following case study of the *First Language Program* profiles a promising initiative which has the potential to set up online language resources for Indigenous languages across Australia. This is one of a number of initiatives that may provide some sustainable Indigenous language materials for current and future language learners.

Case Study 3.3: The First Language Program

The First Language Program is an initiative of the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation aimed at preserving and revitalising oral Indigenous languages by transforming them into written languages.

This program is set up to achieve three outcomes: to develop archives of language materials for imperilled languages; to involve community members in the development of local first language learning materials; and to provide learning resources for the next generations of Indigenous language speakers.

While the overarching objective is to preserve and revitalise languages through school-based and community learning, the program also provides training and employment opportunities for Indigenous adults. Elders and adults have an opportunity to be trained and potentially employed to collect and collate language materials for school learners. (The training program for adult community members is to be accredited through VETAB.)

One of the unique features of the First Language Program is that it uses online technology to house the Indigenous language materials, providing a suite of rich audio-visual and text based learning resources.

The prototype of the first language resource is currently being developed at Tennant Creek. The Tennant Creek Language Centre; Papulu Apparr-kari, has been working with the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation to collect and load images, photographs, videos and local language materials onto a website. This work involves different people in the Tennant Creek community.

Local language speakers are being trained (with the view to potential employment) to record local people speaking their language and pronouncing vocabulary. These recordings become online learning materials of sound and video.

The audio-visual resources are only part of the online learning toolkit. Audio-visuals are supplemented with phonograms, dictionary resources and other teaching and learning materials. These materials are developed by experts at the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation. Language Workers use the audiovisual materials and map the Indigenous language sounds to the English alphabet. The materials are then developed into a range of learning, reading and writing materials. This part of the program is called Coding Aboriginal Languages for Indigenous Literacy (CALIL). CALIL has the added advantage of assisting learners with English literacy skills through the development of pre-literacy skills in a person's first language.

The First Language Program is reliant on interactive and responsive technology. The building of the First Language Program website is occurring at the University of Sydney Centre for Research on Computer Supported Learning and Cognition (US CoCo). An important aspect of the website development is about ensuring that the resource is appropriate for the needs of the community. Researchers from the CoCo team conduct focus group interviews with community members and language workers at various stages of website development. This gives language learners and workers the opportunity to reflect upon how they would use the online tool and helps to ensure that the tool will be of value to the community. As the resource is introduced into other communities, other schools and the broader public, it will continue to be refined by US CoCo.

Ultimately, the First Language Program gives young language learners an opportunity to learn to read and write in their first language. A resource such as this one has the potential to transform literacy education in Indigenous communities and to assist in the preservation and revitalisation of Indigenous languages. The online teaching and learning materials from Tennant Creek are an example of a process that can be replicated across Australia.

The First Language Program has developed its learning resource as an online template. Communities across Australia can follow the same steps as Tennant Creek and upload their local language materials into the online template. The template provides a resource framework that can be adapted and utilized for the teaching and learning of different Indigenous languages in sites across Australia where language speakers exist.

At this stage, the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation is reliant on sponsors for funding. These funds are time limited and currently insufficient for a roll-out of the First Language Program to other locations in Australia. The future of this program is now reliant on support from governments across portfolios, including education, employment, and heritage preservation.

Drama, music and art programs in schools and communities

The combination of language, culture, music, art and performance is irresistible for many Indigenous school-aged students. Combining these programs with input from elders and other community members establishes the potential for a rich language learning environment. Programs that combine languages with the arts can achieve many positive outcomes including language and culture preservation and revitalisation. As the Ngapartji Ngapartji website claims:

> Ngapartji Ngapartji has many layers involving language learning, teaching and maintenance, community development, crime prevention, cross cultural collaboration, creating new literacy training models as well as film, art and theatre making.[60]

The following two programs 'Ngapartji Ngapartji' and 'Music Outback' are examples of the ways in which projects can involve whole communities in language activity and recording local stories and histories.

Case Study 3.4: Ngapartji Ngapartji

The Ngapartji Ngapartji project is run by Big hART; a group of professional artists and producers who have been creating theatre, film, dance and art for 15 years.

Big hART works in small (and large) communities around the country with people experiencing the effects of marginalisation in geographically or socially isolated communities. Big hART experiments with the process of making art with groups over three year periods, honing the quality of their work and showcasing the results in national and international festivals and media.

The most well known work of Ngapartji Ngapartji is the Ngapartji Ngapartji performance: a main stage theatre production and a five-part language show about a family's story from the desert. It tells the story of Trevor Jamieson's father and the Pitjantjatjara people, who lived in the desert country between South Australia and Western Australia.

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60   Ngapartji Ngapartji website. At http://www.ngapartji.org/ (viewed 12 July 2009).

In the 1950s the British nuclear testing at Maralinga and Emu Field moved the people from their country. A large number of people were subsequently contaminated by the nuclear fallout from the atomic tests and many died as a consequence.

The production is only a small part of a much broader project and community, which is ever-growing. This includes the Ninti website, www.ninti.ngapartji.org, an online place of language learning and cultural exchange with a national community of participants; and a long-term community development program which takes place in Alice Springs, Ernabella (SA) and Docker River (NT). A project of this magnitude requires years of research, relationship building, language learning, experimenting, and the ongoing development of trust.

Most recently, Ngapartji Ngapartji are involved in creating a new performance 'Nyuntu Ngali'. This project is informed by a series of community workshops running through 2009. Workshops include music recording, song-writing, film-making, instrument building, naïve image-making, story-recording, multi-generational trips to sacred-sites of relevance to the story, dance and weaving. In 2009 the workshops will be taking place in Ernabella, Mimili and Alice Springs.

Nyuntu Ngali' which translates as 'You, we two' will be an intricate examination of traditional Central Australian survival methods through the framework of a love story. It examines themes of climate-change, endurance, culture and dependence.

Ngaparti Ngapartji also involves young people in explicit language learning activities. For example, part of their work has involved young Pitjantjatjara speakers in developing and videoing Pitjantjatjara language lessons.

The Ngapartji Ngapartji model is one which brings people together for creative purposes and ultimately achieves a number of social and cultural goals. While Indigenous language and culture preservation is at the core of Ngapartji Ngapartji activity, embedded within this activity is community building and history building. Cultural projects that are conducted over years assist communities to build a sense of purpose and enhance a sense of identity. This in turn can have positive impacts on social cohesion.

Case Study 3.5: The Music Outback program[61]

Music Outback Foundation is a non-profit organisation providing music and arts based education opportunities in remote parts of central Australia. It is another example of a community-based initiative that brings different segments of the community together to engage in language and culture activity. Music education provides excellent opportunities to support language and culture curricula in remote schools.

The Music Outback teams work with linguists and community members to record traditional stories in language and develop them into first language contemporary songs. The songs are then taught to school students, recorded and performed. The process has been important for community elders who are the custodians of these stories. The music has given them a method to engage young people in the content of important traditional stories. The music has also strengthened meaning between English and Indigenous languages as songs are developed that include verses in English alongside their local language equivalents.

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61   Music Outback Foundation, The Music Outback website. At http://www.musicoutback.com.au/language&culture.html (viewed 16 July 2009).

Many of the schools that Music Outback has visited have incorporated the music program into their regular curriculum every term. In the eight years of its operation, Music Outback has visited 30 remote communities, covering 6 language groups and an area over 350,000 square kilometres. Over 30 musicians have been involved in the delivery of the program, including internationally recognised musicians Mal Webb and Greg Sheehan, and the leaders from the up and coming band Blue King Brown – Nat Pa'a Pa'a and Carlo Santone.

The Music Outback program considers language preservation to be one of its core objectives. The program has shown that passing traditional stories to the next generation through a contemporary music can be an important action in preserving the long term life of local language and culture, and enthusiasm for this process by traditional custodians and elders continues to grow.

The Foundation operates under the principle that continuity and sustainability are essential factors in program design and delivery in remote Indigenous Australia. A challenge for education in remote locations is to maintain continuity in the relationships between students and teachers. Many teachers leave remote schools after a very short posting and because teacher turnover is high in remote locations students lack continuity in their learning programs.

Music Outback is committed to working with the same schools and communities term after term. The school visits usually last one week and Music Outback teachers choose the number of schools to which they can commit on a sustainable basis. This means that the same teachers make commitments to the same schools and are able to form long term relationships with community members and school students.

More information is available at www.musicoutback.com.au

Mentoring programs

Language mentoring programs are assisting in efforts to revive minority languages. Mentoring is an efficient and effective method for language transference between competent speakers and learners. Its efficiency as a national language revival strategy rests on the fact that it is cost neutral to governments. It relies on the goodwill and relationships between language mentors and language learners. There are no limits to its effectiveness except the willingness of people to engage. It has been one of a number of strategies to increase Māori language resources for the New Zealand population. It has been part of the picture that has seen a rise in the number of Māori speakers as reflected in the 2001 and 2006 Census data.[62]

Case Study 3.6: The tuakana-teina (language mentoring) project[63]

The tuakana-teina project of the Māori Language Commission is a simple and effective method to pass Māori language skills onto others who are developing new language competencies. The aims of the tuakana-teina project are to increase the number of people actually speaking Māori and increase the domains of Māori language use. It is a strategy for the revitalisation and revival of the Māori language in New Zealand.

62   Language Counts, Percentage of Māori population proficient in te reo Māori website. At http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/indicators/education_and_learning_outcomes/literacy/1887 (viewed 12 September 2009).
63   The Māori Language Commission, The tuakana-teina project, Māori Language Commission website. At http://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/maori/issues_m/tt/index.shtml (viewed 12 September 2009).

The tuakana-teina project is based on the premise that each Māori speaker 'adopts' a person who wishes to learn to speak Māori language. The Māori speaker assumes the mentor role and continually speaks Māori to the person wishing to learn, as often as possible, and in everyday settings about everyday things.

The role of the mentor is to provide constant, good-quality examples of Māori language use. The mentor does not teach or correct the learner who at first is required only to listen. In time the learner should be able to understand and reproduce some language used by the mentor. For people with some knowledge of Māori language, the tuakana-teina project will re-enforce and extend what they already know.

This model of language transmission of tuakana-teina is based on methodologies used in Māori language preschools and advanced immersion models of language teaching. The tuakana-teina project extends the language learning methodology out of the formal learning settings and into everyday living environments. All that is required is the time and commitment of the tuakana (mentor) and the teina (learner), and a willingness to work together.

The Māori Language Commission website sets out a process to guide mentors and learners. The sections of information include the following:

1. Finding a Tuakana or a Teina
2. Developing the tuakana-teina relationship
3. Common hurdles and how to overcome them
4. Some more advanced activities
5. Some useful guidelines
6. The tuakana-teina project in action; successful examples.[64]

Using technology to bring the knowledge of Indigenous experts to tertiary education settings

Technology now provides the medium for communication across cities and countries and increasingly it is reaching into some of the remotest places on the planet. Places that were hitherto isolated in their geographic remoteness are now able to connect and interact with others via the internet. Internet services are beginning to be rolled out to very small Indigenous communities using satellite dish technologies. The internet is now a portal and a means through which Indigenous people can document their lives, record their histories and interact with others without geographic boundaries.

In remote Australia, the internet is being used as a conduit for the teaching and learning of Indigenous languages. For example, the Online Language Community Access Pilot (OLCAP), is a trial community-focused approach to accessing language documentation online. This project provides online audio-visual and text in Indigenous languages. Audio or video is linked with transcripts in English and an Indigenous language. OLCAP currently focuses on three areas: Cape York Peninsula, centred around Lockhart River; The Victoria River District; and, the Iwaidja language community. Online materials such as those developed through OLCAP assist people with vocabulary, pronunciation and language context.

The following case study is of an Indigenous language program operating out of Charles Darwin University in the Northern Territory. The program is entitled *Teaching from Country*, and it demonstrates what is possible when free media software such as Skype is used as a conduit for teaching about language and culture from remote locations. The expert knowledge of remote Indigenous people is transmitted to urban

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64   The Māori Language Commission, The tuakana-teina project, Māori Language Commission website. At http://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/maori/issues_m/tt/index.shtml (viewed 12 September 2009).

classrooms through Skype medium. Indigenous teachers conduct their classes and tutorials from their ancestral lands and the students can be anywhere in the world as long as they have access to Skype. The e-classroom sessions are recorded and transcribed and downloaded onto the University's website as reference materials.

Case Study 3.7: Teaching from Country[65]

The *Teaching from Country* project is an initiative of the Charles Darwin University that began in September 2008 and will be ongoing. It was developed with National Fellowship funding from the Australian Learning and Teaching Council. The project uses digital technologies to facilitate the input of Aboriginal knowledges into academic teaching in Australian universities.

This program sets up and evaluates distance education in reverse: the Yolŋu (northeast Arnhemland Aboriginal) lecturers are in remote places and the students of Yolŋu languages, culture and fine arts, are (mostly) on campus.[66]

It brings together Aboriginal elders who are experts in ancestral knowledge, international experts in the use of information and communication technologies for knowledge work, and university teachers and students of Indigenous studies. The Aboriginal elders are the knowledge experts and the teachers, and the Indigenous studies students are the learners located in cities in Australia and overseas. So far the project has connected with students at universities in Darwin, California and Tokyo.

What makes this program unique is the use of digital technology to bring Indigenous philosophies, languages and cultural information from remote locations into the urban classrooms in real time. Hand held cameras allow the Aboriginal teachers and elders to show the students their communities and the natural environment that surrounds them. The technology allows direct interaction between the Aboriginal elders and students using the Skype technology. Students and Aboriginal elders can see each other and ask and answer questions as they might in a classroom.

The project achieves many outcomes. It employs Aboriginal teachers on their ancestral lands, on their own terms in their own ways, thereby contributing to the economic and cultural sustainability of these communities. It provides a relatively cost effective mode of enriched learning for students because it relies on free media. It allows universities to reconsider questions of Indigenous knowledge and its role in the academy in both research and teaching. These questions include epistemological issues – the nature of knowledge as conceived by Indigenous knowledge authorities, the protection of intellectual property, and issues to do with appropriate payments to Indigenous knowledge authorities participating in the work of universities.

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65   Charles Darwin University, Teaching from Country website. At http://learnline.cdu.edu.au/inc/tfc/index.html (viewed 23 May 2009).

66   Charles Darwin University, Teaching from Country website. At http://learnline.cdu.edu.au/inc/tfc/index.html (viewed 23 May 2009).

The website of *Teaching from Country* describes the development of the project below:

> After we had been delivering the Yolŋu studies program for a few years, we were invited to apply for a grant from the Australian Research Council to explore Indigenous Knowledge and Research Management in Northern Australia (IKRMNA). The research focussed on the use of digital technologies (cameras, computers) in the intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge. We found that Aboriginal people we worked with (using emerging digital technologies) preferred to keep their own digital collections rather than storing them in larger databases at the community level or on the internet. We also found that different digital solutions were needed in different places for the different knowledge requirements which people on country prioritised.
>
> Instead of trying to develop a solution which suited everyone, we worked towards a range of emerging solutions for different people. To make the ways we worked and the outcomes clear, we developed an extensive website (www.cdu.edu.au/ik) which has a record of the process, some digital objects we prepared, academic papers, and much else.[67]

Full reporting of the *Teaching from Country* program can be found at www.cdu.edu.au/tfc

Bilingual education

A 2005 study by the World Bank found that 50 percent of the world's most educationally disadvantaged young people do not speak the language spoken in the schools of their region. In other words, 50 percent of the most educationally disadvantaged children are minority language speakers, including Indigenous language speakers. According to the World Bank, the biggest challenge to achieve universal education is to develop appropriate learning practices so that young people who do not speak dominant languages are able to participate in school education.

> *Fifty percent of the world's out-of-school children live in communities where the language of schooling is rarely, if ever, used at home. This underscores the biggest challenge to achieving Education for All (EFA): a legacy of non-productive practices that lead to low levels of learning and high levels of dropout and repetition*.[68]

There is a growing body of international evidence which demonstrates that bilingual education approaches are more effective than English-only approaches in assisting students to transfer from mother tongue literacies to second language literacies. The evidence shows that bilingual approaches work in any language environment where Indigenous students or minority language students are attempting to transfer their first literacies to the dominant language.

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67   Charles Darwin University, *Teaching from Country,* Teaching from Country website. At http://learnline.cdu.edu.au/inc/tfc/docs/TFC_Seminar_PP_notes.pdf.

68   The World Bank, *In Their Own Language, Education for All*. Washington, 2005, p 1. At http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/Education-Notes/EdNotes_Lang_of_Instruct.pdf (viewed 21 September 2009).

In 1998, a meta-analysis of bi-literacy approaches was sponsored by Harvard University, the University of Texas and the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute. The study assessed 75 studies and selected 11 for analysis because they meet minimal standards for research design quality. The meta-analysis assessed the progress of 2,719 students in total. The study found that:

> … children with limited English proficiency who are taught using at least some of their native language perform significantly better on standardized tests than similar children who are taught only in English. In other words, an unbiased reading of the scholarly research suggests that bilingual education helps children who are learning English.[69]

In 2005 another meta-analysis published data from 17 separate studies. The 17 studies all assessed different models of English language teaching. The meta-analysis found that bilingual education is 'consistently superior to all-English approaches'. The Report concluded that:

> … bilingual education programs are effective in promoting academic achievement, and … sound educational policy [and] should permit and even encourage the development and implementation of bilingual education programs.[70]

In light of increasing evidence, countries across the globe are instituting bilingual education approaches. For example, Ecuador established the *National Board of Intercultural and Bilingual Education* to assist in its efforts to provide universal basic education. The stated aims of the Board are to:

> Strengthen and expand civil society's advocacy efforts to improve basic education in the country, through establishing close links with successful models of rural Hispanic, Bilingual and Intercultural Education (BIE) that promote not only quality education but which also promote equity and inclusion.[71]

As part of its 10 year education plan, Ecuador has initiated a school textbook program which includes the publication of bilingual textbooks in indigenous languages.

North Siberia and the USSR have been providing bilingual education programs to minority language speakers for some time.[72] Since 2005, a number of counties in the Asia region are participating in regional initiatives to develop bi-literacies using bilingual approaches. Eight countries are part of UNESCO's bilingual initiative entitled *Mother Tongue/ Bilingual Literacy Program for Ethnic Minorities*. The general objectives of this project are:

> 1) to increase literacy rates among ethnic minority communities (related to EFA Goal 41) through the provision of opportunities to access basic education (EFA Goal 22), and
>
> 2) to improve the quality of life and preserve traditional culture through the provision of relevant and comprehensive literacy programmes.[73]

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69   JP Greene, A Meta-Analysis of the Effectiveness of Bilingual Education, University of Texas at Austin, March 2, 1998. At http://www.languagepolicy.net/archives/greene.htm (viewed 21 April 2009).

70   K Rolstadt, K Mahoney, GV Glass, *The Big Picture: A Meta-Analysis of Program effectiveness Research on English Language Learners*, Educational Policy, 19 (4), 2005, pp 572–594. At http://www.lmri.ucsb.edu/publications/06_gold.pdf (viewed 1 December 2008).

71   Equal Quality Intercultural Bilingual Education Project, "Educa-Ecuador" website. At http://www.care.org.ec/en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=64&Itemid=50 (viewed 12 April 2009).

72   Report of the International Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Languages, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Seventh session, United Nations Economic and Social Council, New York, 21 April – 2 May 2008, Item 7 of the provisional agenda, pp 5–6. At http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/213/56/PDF/N0821356.pdf?OpenElement (viewed 27 July 2009).

73   K Kosonen, C Young, S Malone, Promoting literacy in multilingual settings. Bangkok: UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Bangkok, 2006, p 17. At http://www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/100/multilingual.pdf (viewed 13 February 2009).

China is one of the counties participating in the *Mother Tongue/ Bilingual Literacy Program for Ethnic Minorities*. The Lahu-Chinese bilingual literacy project is developed through an action research model. The project has made the following findings:

- It is difficult for illiterate Lahu learners who are not proficient in Chinese to use Chinese literacy materials because the Lahu and Chinese languages are quite different.

- Lahu learners have made rapid progress in learning to read and write in their mother tongue, Lahu, a language that they already speak. Many are becoming functionally literate.

- The rapid progress has improved many learners' self-confidence.

- The bilingual literacy project has helped many Lahu to better communicate with the Han Chinese.

- The project has helped many Lahu to boost their Lahu identity. Many respect their own culture and language more now and have overcome their earlier feelings of inferiority.

- The project has helped many Lahu learners gain a deeper understanding of their traditional culture. Many are gradually realizing that their own language is an essential part of their unique culture.[74]

**Case Study 3.8: Bilingual education in the Northern Territory**

UNESCO promotes mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual approaches in education – as an important factor that enhances inclusion and quality in learning. Research shows that bilingual and multilingual approaches have a positive impact on learning progress and learning outcomes.[75]

Data from bilingual research in Australia replicates the data from overseas studies. In all cases, students of bilingual approaches have better learning outcomes than control group students. In 2005 the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training undertook a study of the English literacy outcomes of bilingual students and students learning in English-only schools. As Figure 3.2 shows, the students in bilingual schools do better in English reading test results in Years 5 and 7 than Indigenous students in English-only schools of a similar demographic. At Year 3, students in bilingual schools are behind the English-only schools. This is consistent with the bilingual model of transitioning to English. It is not until Year 4 that bilingual students build a bridge to English literacies from their mother tongue literacies.

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74   K Kosonen, C Young, S Malone, *Promoting literacy in multilingual settings*. Bangkok: UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Bangkok, 2006, p 25. At http://www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/100/multilingual.pdf (viewed 13 February 2009).

75   UNESCO *Languages in Education* UNESCO website. At http://www.unesco.org/en/languages-in-education/ (viewed 8 September 2009).

Figure 3.2: National Benchmark English Reading Test Results of Northern Territory School Students. Compares student test results from 10 Bilingual Schools with student test results from 10 English-only schools with Indigenous students from similar demographic, language grouping and contact history. Data combined from 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004[76]
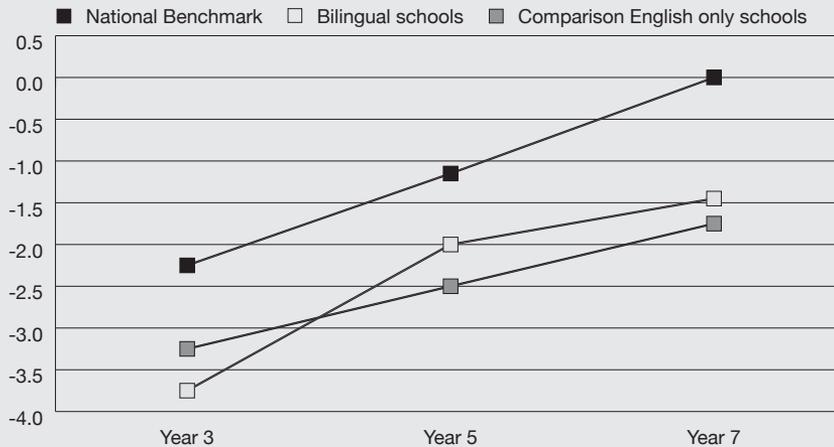
In the Northern Territory, two types of bilingual practices have been operating since the early 1970s when the programs were introduced; the staircase model and the 50/50 model.

The staircase or step bilingual model aims to develop literacies in a child's first language before building a bridge to literacies in English. The transition to English literacies usually happens by Year 4 where instruction in English and development of English literacies become predominant in the classroom. In the first years of schooling, instruction in all subjects is in Indigenous languages. The students learn how to learn in their mother tongue. In some cases English oracy may be introduced and English reading and writing withheld until Year 4 when it is assessed that students will have reached literacy competency in the first language. However, the introduction of English literacy, and the ratio of instruction in first language and English can vary according to local decision-making as well as the resources available at the school.

The 50/50 model has also been implemented in Northern Territory schools. During the late 1980s to late 1990s a number of bilingual schools operated variations of the 50/50 model focussing on the broad aim of giving equal space to English and first language literacies and cultural content. Both the staircase/ step and 50/50 models seek to maintain and strengthen the status of learning oracy and literacy in the local language while introducing students to English.

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76   Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Indigenous Languages and Culture in NT Schools Report 2004–2005*, 2005, p 35. At http://www.det.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/5130/ILCreport.pdf (viewed 12 August 2009).

There are many reasons why bilingual models of education provide sound methodologies for assisting students to develop literacies in their first and second languages. The House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education describes bilingual pedagogy in the following terms:

> There are sound educational reasons for establishing literacy in the child's first language before developing literacy in English. It breaks the pupil's initial learning tasks into two: first they learn to read and write [in their first language], then they begin to cope with English. The child only has to tackle one major task at a time, that of learning to read without the added burden of learning a new language at the same time. The child understands his mother tongue and therefore what he reads makes sense. Once the child knows how to read he can apply basic reading skills to learn to read in English. The child will also gain a sense of satisfaction, rather than frustration, at being able to read and express himself orally and in writing initially in his first language and later in English.[77]

In 2006 Australia had 9,581 schools.[78] Of this number, nine government schools and three Catholic schools were bilingual schools instructing students in Indigenous languages. All of the schools were in the Northern Territory. The nine schools were in some of the remotest regions of this country. They were located in areas where Indigenous language is often the only language heard in the community. English is heard through television if it is available and through interactions with non-Indigenous people who are living and working on Indigenous land.

However the future of the bilingual approaches in Australia is now uncertain. On the 14th October 2008 the Northern Territory Minister for Employment, Education and Training made an announcement which has effectively dismantled the bilingual education approach in the handful of schools where it operated. She announced that she was implementing a policy which would mandate the following:

> … the first four hours of education in all Northern Territory schools will be conducted in English.[79]

Four hours of mandatory English makes it impossible to operate the step/ staircase and 50/50 models of bilingual education. The policy means language and culture activity is relegated to the last hour and a half of the school day. In the Northern Territory this is often the hottest time of the day and a time when quality learning is challenging. The four hours of English policy does not claim to abolish bilingual education, though there is no doubt that it will have that effect.

This is not the first time that a Northern Territory government has tried to dismantle bilingual education. In 1998 the Northern Territory government announced the *Schools our Focus* policy which outlined an intention to progressively withdraw bilingual education.[80] In 2000 the decision was reversed after considerable protest from Indigenous communities and human rights organisations nationally and internationally.

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77   The House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, *Report of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education,* AGPS, Canberra, 1985, p 109.

78   Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4221.0 – Schools, Australia, 2007, p 3. At http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/91CC63D5C3277132CA2573FD0015D0EF/$File/42210_2007.pdf (viewed 12 August 2009).

79   M Scrymgour, 'Education restructure includes greater emphasis on English', NT Government media release. 14 October 2008. At http://newsroom.nt.gov.au/adminmedia/mailouts/4599/attachments/081014%20restructure%20and%20language.pdf (viewed 15 December 2008).

80   C Nicholls, The Closure of the Bilingual Education Programs in Australia's Northern Territory – What Is at Stake? In TESOL Matters Vol. 11 No. 4 September/October/November 2001. At http://www.tesol.org/s_TESOL/sec_document.asp?CID=194&DID=904 (viewed 13 December 2008).

At the peak of the bilingual education movement in the 1970s and 1980s there were more than 20 schools in the Northern Territory with bilingual education approaches. That number has steadily decreased over the years due to hostile policies and a lack of available resources. An essential resource for bilingual education is skilled Indigenous language teachers. However, during the 1990s there was a reduction in the number of training places for Indigenous trainee teachers in the Northern Territory. In addition, the Department of Education withdrew funding from mentoring programs that provided essential support for some Indigenous teachers in bilingual schools.

> … by the late 1990s there was a decline in the number of trained Indigenous teachers in [Northern Territory] schools generally, let alone in the number of teachers proficient in their traditional languages. There are many reasons for this, but a major reason was a reduction in training opportunities at Batchelor Institute for Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE), the main institution training Indigenous teachers. BIITE had run in-community remote area teacher training courses, and pre-training courses. Speakers of Indigenous languages had actively been encouraged to train as teaching assistants and teachers and were given support in their communities while training. But when BIITE moved its focus towards becoming a university, its efforts shifted away from helping students in remote areas increase their literacy and numeracy towards recruiting Indigenous students with tertiary-level entry standards of literacy and numeracy. BIITE attracted many students from interstate who did not speak traditional languages.[81]

The recent policy that mandates four hours of English in Northern Territory schools may be the final axe for Indigenous bilingual approaches in Australia. While some schools have vowed to continue delivering the bilingual approach, they will be fighting against the tide.

The question for governments to consider at this time is whether they are abolishing:

(a) One of the most effective models of English language transference for minority language speakers

(b) One of the most effective methods for keeping Indigenous languages alive in this country

(c) One of the only ways in which successive generations of Indigenous people can develop full competence in their own languages.

Language Nest Preschools and the language immersion techniques

The *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005* recommended the following actions to preserve Indigenous languages:

> The types of programs that require the most urgent support are outlined below. These are listed from local to regional, state and national levels. Each of these programs requires the existence of the other to operate effectively so that support and services are coordinated.
>
> ▪ Language Nests: These are pre-schools/ crèches run by local Indigenous people where there is immersion in the local language and culture [Recommendation 1].
>
> ▪ Community Language Teams: In order to have Language Nests and other programs which function well, it is necessary to have a support team resourcing and backing up the effort. These teams would include elders, who typically might know more of a language. It is also necessary for younger Indigenous adults to be involved to learn from the elders, to take responsibility for administration

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81   J Simpson, J Caffery, P McConvell, Gaps in Australia's Indigenous Language Policy: Dismantling bilingual education in the Northern Territory, AIATSIS Discussion Paper Number 24, 2009, p 17. At http://www. aiatsis.gov.au/research/docs/dp/DP24.pdf (viewed 22 August 2009).

and be part of the teaching, care and production of resources on the languages [Recommendation 2].[82]

Language nests are about immersing pre-school aged children in language environments where they have the opportunity to hear and be saturated in their native languages in the pre-school environment. Children hear the language while engaging in structured play, recreation and all other activities.

The language nest initiative has been successful in revitalising languages in New Zealand and the United States; particularly Hawai'i and mainland North America.

One of the authors of the *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005,* Patrick McConvell, had this to say about the potential for language nests to be established in Australia:

> There is an initiative which has been successful in revitalising languages in this kind of situation overseas, the 'language nests' movement, which began in New Zealand and scored remarkable successes with turning around the rapid decline of the Maori language. They are early childhood programs based on indigenous people using the indigenous language in pre-schools or child-care centres.
>
> For those who like to oppose language and culture to the 'real economy', it is salutary to talk to Maori people about their experience. Revival of Maori language and culture has gone hand in hand with economic revival and a new sense of purpose which is based on their heritage but also engages with the contemporary world.
>
> Language nests have spread to Hawai'i and mainland North America and have been tried in one or two areas in Australia. Given the urgency of the situation, the NILS report proposed a national pilot of language nests in Australia. Once again, nothing has been done about this recommendation but, in the context of a national policy, it could be kick-started soon.[83]

The *Report of the International Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Languages*, to the seventh session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues described the role of language learning in the early years in the following terms:

> It is essential to include indigenous languages and cultures into early childhood care and education curriculum, and promote multilingualism, as is the case in Sabah, Borneo, Malaysia. The early childhood centres described at the meeting prepare children to enter government primary schools and also strengthen their foundation to understand their own languages and practice their own cultures.
>
> Language immersion for children and adults of the Mohawk Nation at Kahnawake in North America has produced positive results for language revival, where activities include the training of trainers, language lessons through television, television series for children and commandeering popular media and modernization. In addition to the full immersion programmes, other positive examples include the Onondaga Nation and Tuscarora Nation, which also teach their languages in their Nation schools.[84]

The following profile of the language nest experiences in Hawai'i demonstrates a remarkable shift in the Indigenous language situation.

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82   Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages, *National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005*, Executive Summary. At http://www.arts.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/35637/nils-report-2005.pdf (viewed 3 July 2009).

83   P McConvell, *Call for a national Indigenous language body*, Lingual Franca, ABC Radio National Australia, 8 November 2008. At http://www.abc.net.au/rn/linguafranca/stories/2008/2410952.htm (viewed 22 September 2009).

84   Report of the International Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Languages, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, seventh session, United Nations Economic and Social Council, New York, 21 April – 2 May 2008, Item 7 of the provisional agenda, pp 5–6. At http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/213/56/PDF/N0821356.pdf?OpenElement (viewed 27 July 2009).

Case Study 3.9: Pūnana Leo, Language Nest Preschools in Hawai'i

> Pūnana Leo means "nest of voices" and depicts the dominant learning method in these centres. These Pūnana Leo bring three and four year olds together in an environment where the students are "fed" solely their native language and culture much like the way young birds are cared for in their own nests.[85]

'Aha Pūnana Leo is the leading entity in Hawai'i and the United States for indigenous language revitalization. A large part of its work is focussed on developing and supporting language nest preschools or Pūnana Leo. Since it began its operation in 1983, 'Aha Pūnana Leo has changed the Hawaiian language situation dramatically. In 1983 there were less than forty Hawaiian children who were able to speak their native language. In 2009 there are now more than 2,000 children who are speakers of the language.[86]

'The Pūnana Leo preschools use the Hawaiian language at all times. There are 11 Pūnana Leo Language Nests in Hawai'i where the preschoolers and the staff speak 'ōlelo Hawai'i at all times. 'Aha Pūnana Leo seeks to develop learning environments where the Hawaiian language is spoken by all other staff including administrators. The Hawaiian cultural foundations are nurtured and practiced in all aspects of the education environment.

The first Pūnana Leo preschool was established in Kekaha, Kaua'i in August 1984. The following year, schools were established in Hilo, Hawai'i and Honolulu, O'ahu and continued to spread to other islands thereafter.[87] The preschool philosophy laid the foundation for the re-emergence of a philosophy of education for Hawaiian schools and higher education institutions. The philosophy has now been written and shared throughout Hawai'i forming educational guidelines which are now followed by the Native Hawaiian Education Council the College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai'i.[88]

Regional language resource centres

The engine room of many Indigenous languages programs are Community Language Resource Centres. These organisations provide support for languages at the regional level. They are situated in the language region so they are a direct resource for community members and local organisations.

Over recent decades, Community Language Resource Centres have been established in some but not all of Australia's Indigenous language regions. The national representative body, the Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages (FATSIL) provides a communication network for these community organisations across Australia. FATSIL also has an advisory role to government and relevant non-government agencies on issues relating to Indigenous languages.[89]

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85   Aha Pūnana Leo website. At http://www.ahapunanaleo.org/eng/about/about_history.html (viewed 23 September 2009).
86   Aha Pūnana Leo website. At http://www.ahapunanaleo.org/eng/index.html (viewed 23 September 2009).
87   Aha Pūnana Leo website. At http://www.ahapunanaleo.org/eng/about/about_history.html (viewed 23 September 2009).
88   Aha Pūnana Leo website. At http://www.ahapunanaleo.org/eng/about/about_history.html (viewed 23 September 2009).
89   Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages website. At http://www.fatsil.org.au/About/Roles-Aims/ (viewed 8 September 2009).

Community Language Resource Centres vary in their functions and their sources of funding. Some are funded from state or territory government grants and others from the federally funded Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records (MILR) program. For the most part Community Language Resource Centres carry out research work, advocacy, language development programs, archiving of Indigenous language materials and technical assistance to schools and other organisations.

The following profile of the Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre demonstrates the functions and operations of organisations of this kind.

Case Study 3.10: Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre[90]

Established in 2004, Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre (MRALC) provides strategic support for Aboriginal communities of the northern and central coasts of NSW who want to revitalise their languages. MRALC is a regional language centre that aims to support the following languages: Awabakal – Wonnarua, Bundjalung, Darkinyung, Dhanggati, Kattang (Birrbay & Warrmay) and Yaygirr – Yaegl.

Like other regional language centres, MRALC conducts research on several Aboriginal languages and supports communities in their efforts to learn and teach their languages. Regional Aboriginal Language Centres have until recently only existed in more remote areas of Australia, for example Katherine Regional Aboriginal Language Centre, and Wangka Maya in Port Headland. There have been language programs elsewhere including NSW but they have tended to work with one local language, or closely related dialects, for example the Yuwaalaraay Language Program based in Walgett supports Yuwaalaraay, Yuwaalayaay and Gamilaraay. MRALC has an Advisory Group made up of representatives from all languages, and a Specialist Group of Elders, linguists and teachers who assist as needed. MRALC employs a coordinator – linguist, language researchers – teachers and teacher – linguists.

MRALC supports Aboriginal language revitalisation, that is research and development for the six language groups, through activities that include:

- Providing access to linguistic expertise, and training for Aboriginal people.
- Recording languages wherever possible, and assisting with access to archival materials, providing a regional storage base for these materials.
- Producing language materials such as dictionaries or wordlists, grammars, learner's guides, transcriptions and translations.
- Providing community access to languages by using, and assisting communities to use information technology such as: Transcriber, Shoebox, Powerpoint and Adobe Audition.
- Employing linguists, Aboriginal language researchers and specialists in Information and Communication Technology.
- Raising awareness in the wider community about the value of Aboriginal languages.[91]

90 Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre web materials. At http://www.muurrbay.org.au/mralc.html (viewed 26 August 2009).
91 Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre web materials. At http://www.muurrbay.org.au/mralc.html (viewed 26 August 2009).

While the Many Rivers Aboriginal Language Centre is an example of a very effective organisation, some Community Language Resource Centres have encountered difficulties in their operation. Given the limited funds and resources, the minimal reporting for funding, and the lack of formal evaluation, there is the potential for Community Language Resource Centres to lack clear direction in terms of their function and activity. A monitoring and accountability framework with guidelines and centralised support would greatly assist Community Language Resource Centres to focus and refine their language maintenance and revitalisation activity.

Tertiary education programs for future Indigenous language teachers

In order to deliver Indigenous language studies in schools, it is essential to have trained Indigenous language speakers. In 2004, twenty eight schools in the Northern Territory responded to a survey asking them to nominate the most important resources required to deliver Indigenous language and culture subjects in schools.[92] The survey respondents identified that professional learning for Indigenous staff was the number one resource for the successful delivery of these programs.[93]

Indigenous language courses are available at a handful of Australian universities and vocational training institutions. Some of these tertiary training institutions provide language studies, some provide culture studies and others combine both language and culture study components.

Case Study 3.11: Certificate course and higher education degrees in Indigenous language studies

Tertiary education courses offering qualifications in Indigenous language and culture studies range from certificates at the vocational level to post graduate studies at the university level.

In pre-schools and primary schools it is Assistant Teachers who support language and culture studies. They are fluent Indigenous language speakers and they team-teach in classrooms; often translating and explaining difficult concepts in the child's first language. It is certificate courses at the vocational education level that provide qualifications for Assistant Teachers. For example, the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in the Northern Territory offers Certificate III and IV courses in Indigenous Education Work.

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92   Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Indigenous Languages And Culture in NT Schools Report 2004–2005*, 2005, p 22. At http://www.det.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/5130/ILCreport.pdf (viewed 12 August 2009).

93   Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Indigenous Languages And Culture in NT Schools Report 2004–2005*, 2005, p 22. At http://www.det.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/5130/ILCreport.pdf (viewed 12 August 2009).

The certificate courses at Batchelor commenced in 2000, but Indigenous Assistant Teachers reported difficulty in enrolling due to competition for limited places.[94] However since 2008, the Northern Territory Government and DEEWR have funded additional places and as a consequence, there has been a 200 percent increase in Assistant Teacher enrolments.[95]

Batchelor also offers the Advanced Diploma of Arts (Language Studies), the Diploma of Interpreting and the Graduate Certificate in Applied Linguistics. These courses are for students who are interested in keeping their own languages strong and are keen to record and document their languages. Many of these students go on to teaching positions.[96]

In NSW, the University of Sydney offers Graduate Certificate, Diploma and Master of Indigenous Languages Education courses to Indigenous educators who wish to develop their skills in Indigenous languages teaching.[97]

These subjects are offered in three separate week long blocks each semester. There is no cost to the student for travel, meals and accommodation. These costs are covered by the University.[98]

Other universities provide Indigenous languages studies in Australia. For the most part, these courses are dependent upon the availability of qualified staff who are able to teach Indigenous language studies at the tertiary level.

Governments must form partnerships with vocational education and higher education institutions to ensure that there are sufficient courses and training places for language and culture studies students. Without these courses there will be no trained personnel for schools. The example at Batchelor demonstrates that there is sometimes demand for language education courses but limited capacity at the institutional level to deliver. Targeted assistance from governments is required to ensure that training places at tertiary education institutions meet the demand of potential students and the supply needs of schools.

Secondary education

Most Australian state and territory education departments have made some provision for Indigenous language studies in their school curriculum frameworks.

94 Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Indigenous Languages And Culture in NT Schools Report 2004–2005*, 2005, p 23. At http://www.det.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/5130/ILCreport.pdf (viewed 12 August 2009).

95 K Grace, et al, How to satisfy the specific Teacher Training demands of geographically dispersed Indigenous Assistant Teachers via a holistic training and assessment model. At http://210.15.199.34/ei/viewpdf.esp?id=256&file=P:/Eventwin/docs/pdf/niec2009Abstract00062.pdf (viewed 3 November 2009).

96 Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics website. At https://www.batchelor.edu.au/callwebsite/call_index.html (viewed 3 November 2009).

97 University of Sydney website. At http://www.koori.usyd.edu.au/studying/postgrad.shtml (viewed 3 November 2009).

98 University of Sydney website. At http://www.koori.usyd.edu.au/studying/postgrad.shtml (viewed 3 November 2009).

Case Study 3.12: Embedding Indigenous language studies into state and territory curriculum frameworks

South Australia's framework for Australian Indigenous languages provides several types of programs appropriate for different language situations. The framework includes first language maintenance, second language learning, language revival, and language awareness subjects.[99]

In other Australian jurisdictions there is still work to be done to integrate Indigenous languages into the state curriculum frameworks. For example, several schools in Queensland have Indigenous language programs, but almost all of these programs are funded by the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and not by the Department of Education.[100] While in 2006 the Queensland Studies Authority accepted a recommendation to consider accrediting Indigenous language studies in schools, no action has occurred to date.[101] Queensland schools do offer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies at the senior secondary level, though this subject is focussed on culture and not languages.[102]

Indigenous languages have only recently become a study option for senior secondary students in some Australian states and territories. For example, 2008 was the first year that Western Australia schools offered Indigenous language studies at the Year 11 and 12 levels. In 2009, the first examinations will be held for Year 12 students of Aboriginal Languages as part of the Western Australia Certificate in Education.[103]

At the senior secondary level, South Australian students can study Indigenous languages as part of the South Australian Certificate in Education. The Australian Languages subjects are taught by Indigenous teachers and Indigenous Language and Culture Specialists with the support of teachers, linguists and curriculum specialists.[104]

It is time for Australian education departments to provide consistency in the availability of Indigenous language studies across state and territory jurisdictions. In future, the LOTE section of Australia's national curriculum framework will include Indigenous languages as a study option, though state and territory governments must ensure that there are training places and courses for future language teachers and schools have resources to deliver Indigenous languages at all levels of the school syllabus.

99 South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework. At http://www.sacsa.sa.edu.au/content/doc_fsrc.asp?t=LA&ID=EYINTROCONTEXT&DATA= (viewed 3 November 2009).

100 C Nancarrow, The Future of Indigenous Languages in Queensland schools, 2003. At http://people.aapt.net.au/~cassynancarrow/language/futures.html (viewed 3 November 2009).

101 Ngapartji Ngapartji website. At http://www.ngapartji.org/content/view/22/52/ (viewed 3 November 2009).

102 Queensland Studies Authority, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Brochure. At http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/downloads/learning/snr_atsi_studies_brochure.pdf (viewed 3 November 2009).

103 Western Australian Curriculum Council website. At http://www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/internet/Senior_Secondary/Courses/Aboriginal_Languages (viewed 3 November 2009).

104 South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services, Online Curriculum Portal. At http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/curric/pages/NumeracySciences/SACE/ (viewed 3 November 2009).

(c)   Summary

Australian governments will need to take strategic and programmatic action to preserve Indigenous languages in this country. There is a high level of interdependence in the actions that are needed to reverse the language decline. One action will not function well without the other. For example, schools will not be able to deliver Indigenous languages programs without corresponding action from tertiary education institutions. Vocational institutions and universities must provide training places for future language teachers. Regional Language Resource Centres will not be able to deliver an optimum service without guidance from a centralised language body with responsibility to distribute funding and monitor the application of appropriate resources to the different language situations across the nation.

It is important to reiterate the point that was made at the beginning of this section: international experience shows that language movements have been shown to be successful when they become a national responsibility. From this centralised guidance, other actions can follow.

3.5 Findings

Section 3.1: Introduction

- Indigenous languages are at a critical stage of endangerment in Australia.
- Australia now has a national Indigenous languages approach, though on its own, the national approach will not be enough to stop the language decline.

Section 3.2: Why preserve Indigenous languages?

- Language is the medium through which culture is transmitted.
- Strong language and culture are associated with resilience and better health outcomes for Indigenous people.
- Bilingualism enhances cognitive development in infants.
- Indigenous languages increase employment opportunities for Indigenous people.
- Indigenous language and culture is an important component of Australia's tourism industry which consumes more than $70 billion in Australian goods and services.
- Indigenous cultural knowledge has assisted scientists in understanding patterns of climate change. Indigenous languages are the medium through which this knowledge has been passed down over millennia.
- The loss or denial of language and culture can have negative impacts on Indigenous people.

Section 3.3: Australian policy and Indigenous languages

- Indigenous languages have no official status in Australia.
- Successive Australian governments have developed policies and practices that emphasise English monolingualism.

- The main source of funding for Indigenous languages is the Commonwealth Government's Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records (MILR) program. It provided $8.8 million to 66 grant recipients in 2008–09.
- MILR grant allocations to organisations range from $10,000 to $450,000 per year. The average allocation was in the vicinity of $133,300.
- The Australian Government announced the Indigenous languages approach in August 2009 at a time when it had already allocated funds for Indigenous languages. There were no new funds allocated with the August announcement.
- There are some large contradictions between the Commonwealth Indigenous languages policy and the state and territory language policies.
- There is considerable variation amongst the state and territory Indigenous languages policies and levels of commitment.
- NSW is the only state or territory jurisdiction to have an Indigenous language policy which sits across different portfolio areas. Other states and territories have policies that are limited to specific areas of government activity.
- Australia does not have an overarching framework to monitor the application of Indigenous language resources and programs to different language situations.
- The closure of the bilingual resource development units means the removal of funding from Indigenous language maintenance materials.

Section 3.4: Australian and international approaches aimed at protecting and promoting Indigenous languages

(a)   Strategies

- There has been significant language revival in countries where Indigenous languages have been given official status. This includes constitutional or statutory recognition.
- Successful national Indigenous language organisations have some common features. They are established through statute and they have functions which include: advising government through formal structures and relationships; participating in the development of policy; maintaining language information databases; developing standards for languages; accrediting language workers; naming places and things; managing funding and resources; and managing language promotions and communications
- Australia has some particular language challenges. More than 100 Indigenous languages are spoken in Australia. Therefore it is not possible to give official status to a single language, though Indigenous languages could be accorded a special status as 'national languages' while not being official languages.

- The divide between the functions of the Commonwealth and the functions of the states and territories makes it difficult to implement aspects of a national policy. Specific solutions are requires to address this divide.

(b)   Programs

- Language teaching can be substantially enhanced through the availability of teaching materials in Indigenous languages. Online templates may assist in standardising and improving the quality of teaching materials. The involvement of community members in language resource development contributes to local employment and local language sustainability.

- Community-based programs involving music and theatre can be designed to involve whole communities. This promotes language maintenance and revival across all generations. An important component of any program is consistency of contact between the program facilitators and the participating communities.

- Mentoring is a simple and cost effective way to promote language revival on a large scale. It requires promotion and guidelines, and otherwise is reliant on the freely formed relationships between language mentors and language learners.

- The internet is a portal through which Indigenous people can teach their languages and cultures from their communities. Using Skype, Indigenous teachers can conduct tutorials from their ancestral lands in real time, beaming images and instruction into university classrooms all over the globe.

- here is national and international evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of the bilingual education approach. The Northern Territory Government has taken direct action to abolish bilingual education at a time when many countries across the world are adopting this approach as best practice.

- Language nests in preschools provide language immersion in a child's traditional language. Saturating children in their first languages before the commencement of formal schooling can dramatically increased bilingualism. In countries where languages have been declining, the language nests have been effective in increasing the numbers of Indigenous language speakers.

- Regional language resource centres provide language resources to communities and organisations. They are able to directly contribute to language maintenance and revival activities through recording languages, training local people, teaching languages and developing language materials. They would benefit from more resources, assistance with archiving materials and the development of an accountability framework which can be monitored by a national body.

- Governments must form partnerships with vocational education and higher education institutions to ensure that there are sufficient courses and training places for language and culture studies students. Without these courses there will be no trained language teaching personnel in schools.

- Indigenous language studies are part of some, but not all state and territory school curriculum frameworks. The national curriculum framework will standardise curriculum offerings in future, including the potential for schools to offer Indigenous language studies. However, state and territory governments will need to establish the preconditions for a trained Indigenous language teacher workforce.

3.6 Recommendations

Now that Australia has a national approach to preserve Indigenous languages: *Indigenous Languages – A National Approach 2009*, there are three major challenges that will need to be addressed to ensure the successful implementation of this policy.

1. The first is how to hold the different levels of governments in Australia to a consistent position on Indigenous language policy and action.

2. The second is how to coordinate intra government activity and ensure quality control because language preservation requires interaction between multiple portfolio areas including early childhood development services, employment, school education, higher education and research services.

3. The third is how to stretch the limited resources ($9.3 million for the financial year 2008–09) to address a critical and complex language situation across the nation.

The following recommendations are concerned with developing appropriate processes, structures, agreements and decision-making bodies that can maintain, revitalise, protect and promote Australia's endangered Indigenous languages.

Recommendations

In order to implement Article 13 of *The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and in recognition that the Australian Government has a strategic role in Indigenous language preservation, that the Australian Government commit to the following:[105]

3.1   Immediately fund a national working group with the task of establishing a national Indigenous languages body as per the commitment of *Indigenous Languages – A National Approach.*[106]

3.2   Commit to the development of a national Indigenous languages body with functions and responsibilities similar to those of the Māori Language Commission.

3.3   Utilise the expertise of the national body to assess the required resources for critically endangered languages and commit these resources immediately.

3.4   Agree to resource an ongoing plan of action for the preservation and promotion of Indigenous languages as recommended by the national Indigenous languages body.

3.5   Become a signatory to the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003).

3.6   Through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), develop agreements with all governments to ensure consistency and compliance with Australia's *Indigenous Languages – A National Approach*.

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

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105   Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007, art 13. 1: Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons. At http://iwgia.synkron.com/graphics/Synkron-Library/Documents/InternationalProcesses/DraftDeclaration/07-09-13ResolutiontextDeclaration.pdf (viewed 25 September 2009).

106   Australian Government Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, *Indigenous Languages – A National Approach. The importance of Australia's Indigenous languages*. At http://www.arts.gov.au/indigenous/languages_policy (viewed 3 September 2009).