



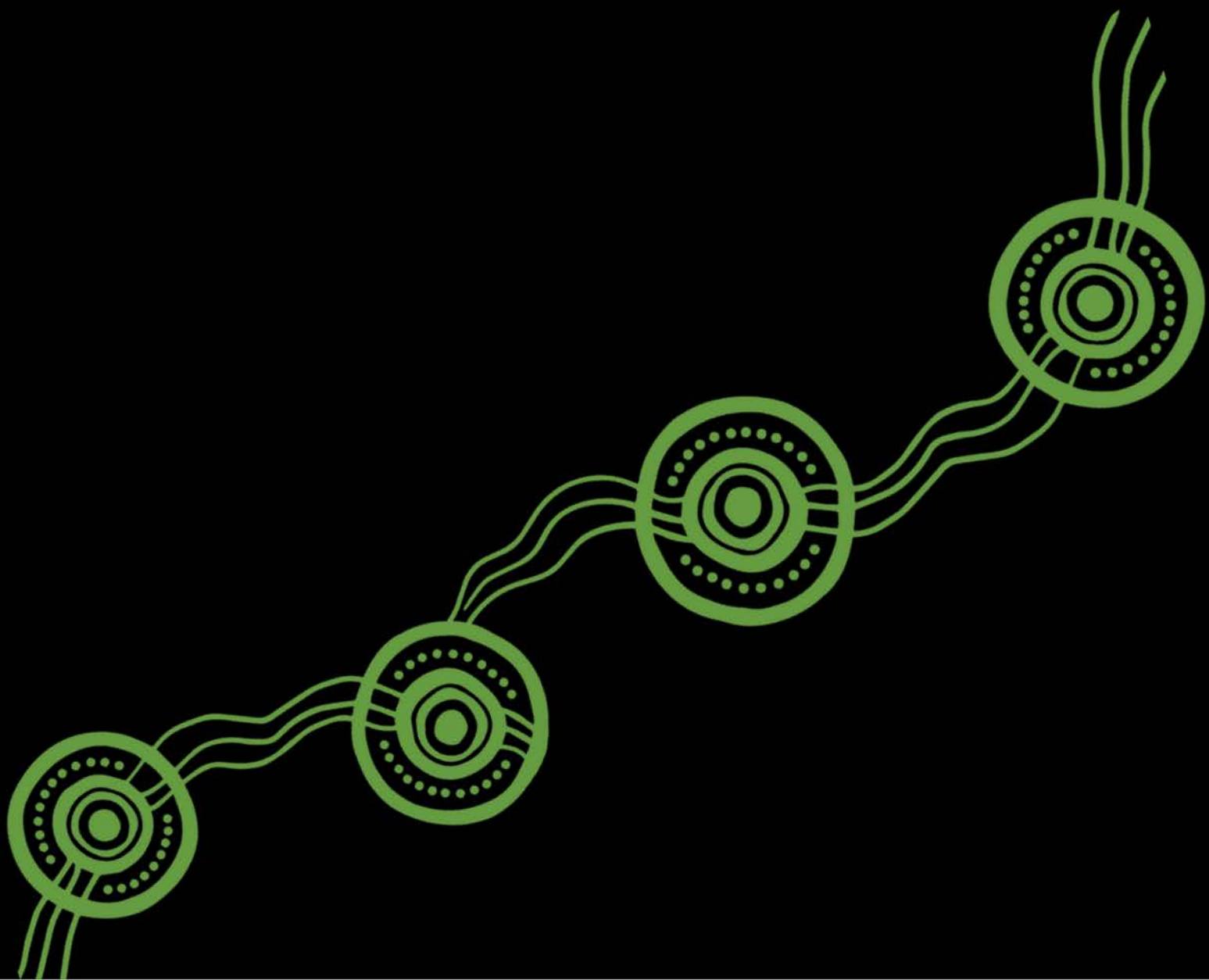
Aboriginal Languages  
Trust

# CONSULTATION OUTCOMES REPORT

Strategic Plan









# Acknowledgment of Country

The NSW Aboriginal Languages Trust acknowledges and pays respect to Aboriginal Peoples who are the custodians of Country. We acknowledge their unbroken connections to this place through Story, Kinship and Language, from time immemorial.

We pay our respect to their Elders past and present, and we acknowledge the leaders of today, those who continue to carry Language, Culture and Truth for their People.



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*Note: The Aboriginal Languages Trust capitalizes words that have distinct meaning for Aboriginal People. We do this as a sign of respect and note that it may vary from capitalisation used in Standard Australian English. These words include: Aboriginal, Indigenous, First Nations, Language, Culture, Community, Country, Songlines, Lore/Law, Ancestors, Old People, Aboriginal People/s.*





# About the Aboriginal Languages Trust

In 2017, NSW became the first place in Australia to pass a law recognising the importance of Aboriginal Languages to Aboriginal Peoples and the people of NSW. This law is called the Aboriginal Languages Act 2017. The Act led to the creation of the Aboriginal Languages Trust, which was established in March 2020 to provide ongoing support to Language activities across NSW.

*“Language belongs to Country, so Language gives an understanding of place on Country.” – Gumbaynggirr Language Practitioner*

## The Trust’s draft Strategic Plan

The Trust’s Board developed a draft Strategic Plan in 2020 based on:

- feedback from Communities during state-wide consultations on the Languages Act,
- subsequent consultations with Community Language practitioners and Government agencies, including feedback from those who attended the Ngamuru Languages Gathering in 2019, and
- the Board’s knowledge and experience gained from working with NSW’s first Languages.

## The importance of the Strategic Plan consultations

The Strategic Plan will map out the next five years of work for the Trust and will guide investment and activities in Languages revival in NSW. The strategic plan consultations were therefore a very important part of setting up the Trust for long-term success.

The Strategic Plan consultations were undertaken between March and December 2021. The consultations sought feedback on the draft strategic plan to ensure the final Strategic Plan reflects the perspectives, needs and concerns of Community members and those involved in Language activities.

The consultations provided an important opportunity to hear Community voices and ensure they are guiding the direction of the Trust. The Trust also wanted to ensure that the plan meets Community expectations about the work we will undertake.



The Aboriginal Languages Trust is an Aboriginal-led NSW Government Agency established under the NSW Aboriginal Languages Act 2017 to provide a focused, coordinated, and sustained effort in relation to Aboriginal Languages activities at local, regional and State levels.

The work of the Trust is managed by a Board made up of nine Aboriginal members with the skills, expertise and experience relevant to the work of the Trust. Our Board members are recognised and have appropriate standing in their communities.

*“The Trust’s role needs to extend beyond the language space and influence all areas around issues of access to Country and revitalising culture. It’s all interconnected.” -  
Gathang Language Practitioner*

Collectively, the Board brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to draw on to the work of the Trust.

The Board members are:



Mr Jason Behrendt  
(Chairperson)  
Yuwaalaraay



Ms Catherine Trindall  
(Deputy Chair)  
Gomeroi Murri Yinnar



Prof Lindon Coombes  
Yuallarray



Ms Patricia Ellis  
Brinja-Yuin



Mr Raymond Ingrey  
Dharawal



Ms Fiona Kelly  
Barkindji Ngiyampaa



Dr Raymond Kelly  
Thangatti Gumbaynggir



Dr Lynette Riley  
Wiradjuri Gamilaroi



Mr Clark Webb  
Bundjalung Gumbaynggirr

# Purpose of this Report

This report summarises what was heard during the consultations and changes that have been made to the draft Strategic Plan in response to this feedback. This report shows that the Trust has heard and taken into consideration feedback from consultations when creating our final Strategic Plan.

## Thanks to all who participated in the consultations

The Aboriginal Languages Trust would like to sincerely thank everyone who participated in the consultations. The Trust appreciates the depth of knowledge and diversity of experiences that were shared by all.





**The Aboriginal Languages Trust consulted on their draft  
Strategic Plan from March – December 2021.**

**Around 400 people were consulted, of which 81%  
identified as Aboriginal, including Aboriginal Language  
practitioners, Community members, Aboriginal Peak  
Bodies and major institutions, Aboriginal Community  
Controlled Organisations and government  
representatives.**

## **The Trust heard feedback on a range of topics, including:**

- Aboriginal Languages are central to identity, Culture and Country for Aboriginal People and Communities.
- Language belongs to Country, and Aboriginal Communities are the custodians of Language. Aboriginal Communities must have absolute control over their Languages.
- Many Aboriginal People find the Language revitalisation journey to be emotional and potentially trauma-triggering, but also healing and Community-strengthening.
- Communities want to see their Languages living and spoken fluently. To make this happen, practical tools are needed: Language centres, access to archives, access to Country, technology, Language teachers and Language programs.
- There is a high demand for more Language centres that would be Community owned and run, with sustainable government funding.
- Some Communities would like support developing Community Language Plans and Language governance groups.
- Government funding for Languages must be long term and sustainable and should not involve onerous application processes.
- There is a strong need for networking between Language Communities so that people can connect, share and learn from each other.
- Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Property rights has become a pressing issue due to increased interest in Aboriginal Languages, growing requests for Language use and Communities wanting to share Language knowledge safely.
- Communities want to have strong working relationships with the Trust and want the opportunity to have local representation to the Trust.
- There is a high demand for Language teachers, but people have concerns about whether it is a sustainable career option.
- More research on NSW Languages and revitalisation practices is needed, as well as greater access to archives and Language resources.







# Who we consulted

The Aboriginal Languages Trust wanted Community voices to be at the centre of our consultation process. To achieve this, the Trust gave Language Groups different opportunities to voice their feedback on the draft Strategic Plan.

These opportunities included consultation meetings with Language practitioners, Community members, Aboriginal Community Organisations and regional networks, peak Aboriginal organisations and major institutions, and government agencies.

The Trust also sent Community members and relevant university stakeholders a survey and received written submissions.

*Note: Almost all consultation meetings took place online due to COVID-19 restrictions.*



## 7 Community YarnUps

Aboriginal Community members: 117 people



## 33 targeted consultations

Aboriginal Community Organisations and regional networks: 74 people  
Peaks and major institutions: 46 people  
Government: 135 people



## 19 In-Depth Interviews

Aboriginal Languages practitioners: 31 people



## 23 Written responses

**394** Total people consulted

**81%** Were Aboriginal



## A note on Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Property

The Aboriginal Languages Trust acknowledges and respects that Language and Culture knowledge shared as part of this consultation process remains the intellectual property of those who shared it. All consultation participants were aware and consented to their feedback being recorded to inform our Strategic Plan and so that the Trust would have a greater understanding of what is needed for Language work to be successful. In this report, we have chosen not to attribute feedback and comments to individuals to ensure Cultural safety for these people.

### Aboriginal Language practitioners

The Trust's Community Engagement Officer reached out to 60 Aboriginal Language practitioners across NSW. We conducted 19 in-depth interviews with 31 Language practitioners from 21 August – 20 October 2021. These Language practitioners represented 20 different Language Groups.

We met with one Language practitioner over the phone, and we met with all others through video conferencing.

These meetings have allowed the Trust to build relationships with people actively undertaking Language work in Communities and to have a deeper understanding of Language revitalisation work and the needs of Language Communities.

### Aboriginal Community Organisations and regional networks

The Trust ran consultation meetings with local Aboriginal Community organisations and regional networks from 26 August – 7 December 2021. 74 people from 9 Aboriginal Community Organisations and regional networks were consulted.

Meetings with Aboriginal Community Organisations and regional networks typically ran for 1 hour and were led by the Trust's Executive Director. All were done via video conference, except for 1 which was done face-to-face.

The Trust's Executive Director first provided participants with information about the Aboriginal Languages Act and the Trust and/or shared a video of Dr. Ray Kelly talking about his connection to Language and Language revival. Participants were then taken through the draft strategic plan and had the opportunity to give feedback. Participants also had the chance to yarn and share their experiences and knowledge of Language revitalisation.





## Aboriginal Community members - Regional online YarnUps

The Trust organised seven regional online Community YarnUp sessions which took place throughout October 2021 on Zoom. Originally the Trust had intended on holding a Language gathering in 2021 to gain face to face feedback from Aboriginal Community members, but the gathering needed to be postponed due to COVID-19.

*“Language is education – our customs and lores/laws. Our connection to Country is through Language and to each other”*  
Illawarra South East YarnUp Participant

The YarnUp sessions were open to all Aboriginal Community members from each of the seven Aboriginal Affairs NSW regions: North Coast, Hunter-Central Coast, Greater Sydney, New England Northwest, Illawarra Southeast, Binaal Billa Central West and Murdi Paaki. 117 Aboriginal Community members attended the YarnUp sessions. The Trust engaged Cox Inall Ridgeway to provide event management and facilitation services for the YarnUps due to the size of the online event.

The YarnUps were incentivised. Participants went in the draw to win one of three Deadly Packs purchased through Trading Blak and prizes were drawn at the end of each YarnUp session.

The YarnUps started with the Trust’s Executive Director presenting participants with a summary of the Trust’s draft Strategic Plan and sharing a video showing the personal significance of Language revitalisation for the Trust’s Board member Dr. Raymond Kelly.

Participants were then split into Zoom break out rooms where they took part in a small group yarning session. The yarning sessions were facilitated by Cox Inall Ridgeway consultants and focused on the following topics:

- The importance of Language
- Language roadmaps
- How the Trust should connect with Communities
- Grant funding
- Language centres
- Respect for Language sovereignty
- Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Property (ACIP) rights





### **Peak Aboriginal organisations and major institutions**

The Trust consulted 46 people from six Peak Aboriginal organisations and major institutions. The consultation meetings ran from 22 June – 14 September 2021.

Meetings with peak Aboriginal organisations and major institutions took place via video conferencing and typically ran for 1 hour. The meetings were led by the Trust’s Executive Director who provided information about the Aboriginal Languages Act and the Trust and talked through the draft strategic plan. Participants had the opportunity to yarn and share their experiences and knowledge.

The Trust also received 1 written submission from a Peak Aboriginal organisation.

### **Government stakeholders**

The Trust consulted 135 people from 18 local, state and federal government stakeholders from 27 May – 15 October 2021.

Meetings took place via video conference. They typically ran for 1 hour. The meetings were led by the Trust’s Executive Director who generally first presented information on the establishment of the Aboriginal Languages and draft strategic plan.

Participants had the chance to ask questions and provide feedback.

The Trust received written submissions from 3 government stakeholders.

### **Survey respondents**

The Trust emailed over 100 Community members and groups a link to complete a survey about the draft strategic plan in March 2021. Community members were asked to complete the survey by the end of May. In early May, university stakeholders were invited to complete the survey.

The survey was made up of 24 questions, which asked for feedback on the different parts of the draft strategic plan. Most questions could be answered by selecting a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ checkbox and contained a text box where further comments could be written.

The Trust received 19 survey responses.









# Recommendations

## **Language is central to identity, Culture and Country**

- The Trust's Strategic Plan must honour the connection between Language, identity, place Kin and Community for Aboriginal Peoples.

## **Language belongs to Country, Communities are the custodians**

- Aboriginal Community custodianship of Language must be at the centre of everything the Trust does. The Trust must support Communities to determine the use, growth and Cultural integrity of their Languages.
- The Trust should raise awareness of Language sovereignty in the broader NSW community.

## **Healing**

- Language can be both healing and trauma triggering for many Aboriginal Peoples. Trust staff must have a heightened awareness of this and take a trauma-informed approach to any work with Communities.

## **Languages strong and used in everyday life**

- The Trust should advocate for free and accessible access to Language for all Community members.
- The Trust should help to provide Communities with the resources and tools they need to strengthen languages, including Language centres, access to archives, and teaching resources.
- The Trust must uphold each Community's right to determine if they want to share their Language with others.



## **Language Centres**

- The Trust should advocate within government for the funding and resources to create more Language Centres across the state.
- The Trust should look to models of Language centres that work well and seek to replicate these.

## **Community Language Plans**

- The Trust should build relationships with each Community to understand their Language needs and priorities. Communities who want a Language Plan should be supported to create one.
- Where Communities would like to set up a Language governance group, the Trust should support them to do this.

## **Funding**

- All Language funding programs should be designed to offer long- term, sustainable and accessible funding to Communities.
- Language Communities should be offered support to prepare funding applications.
- Government institutions which are accessed by Aboriginal Communities could engage in more bilingual activities to support Language revitalisation
- The Trust should consider a proactive approach to grants funding, where Communities are approached, rather than having to apply, and Community Language Plans can be used to inform the Trust of funding needs.
- The Trust should be flexible with how funding applications can be made, and offer options for written, online and verbal applications.
- The Trust should consider offering support to Communities who wish to diversify their funding, including through philanthropic investment, corporate funding or becoming self-reliant.

## **Access to Archives and Country**

- The Trust should work with institutions and Communities to improve local Community access to archive materials.
- The Trust should work with Communities to obtain better access to Country for Language revitalisation.



- Networks**
  - The Trust should establish and resources formal network groups that encourage peer-to-peer sharing and learning.
- Cultural and Intellectual Property**
  - The Trust should provide information and support to Language Communities to better understand and protect their Cultural and Intellectual Property rights.
  - The Trust should also seek to educate Government departments and others who want to engage with Languages about ACIP and ownership of Language.
- Trust-Community relationships**
  - The Trust should create a plan to raise awareness of its existence and how it can support Language Communities.
  - Such a plan should outline how the Trust will have long term and sustained engagement with each Language Community in NSW.
  - The Trust should consider employing local people in each region to be the point of contact between each Community and the Trust.
  - The Trust should consider designing and implementing a governance structure that allows each Community to have representation in the Trust, such as a subcommittee or local reference group.
- Language Program**
  - The Trust should support and resource Communities to develop local Language programs
  - The Trust should advocate for widespread delivery of Community
  - controlled Language programs in schools.
- Languages Workforce**
  - The Trust should promote Language related careers, including teaching, for Aboriginal people.
  - The Trust should support Community members who wish to undertake Language teaching qualifications.
  - Communities who wish to develop Language teaching protocols should be supported to do so.
- Research and resources**
  - The Trust should develop a research agenda based on Community research needs, and fund Community research projects.
  - Aboriginal researchers should be engaged to undertake research work in Communities.
  - The Trust should support development and storage of Language resources and materials.







## What We Heard

*“Language is who we are as a People and where we come from. Language is incorporated in everything Culturally that we do... Language is like the glue that holds everything together.”*

*Yuin Language Practitioner*

### Key Themes

- Language is central to identity, Culture and Country
- Networks
- Healing
- Languages strong and used in everyday life
- Language Centres
- Access to Archives and Country
- Community Language Plans
- Funding
- Language belongs to Country, Communities are the custodians
- Cultural and Intellectual Property
- Trust – Community relationships
- Language Programs
- Languages Workforce
- Research and resources



# Language is central to identity, Culture and Country

*"Language is a sovereign structure, its Blackfulla way. The way you come at how you talk and what you say has all the structure for how to be a strong person in that place."* – Yuwaalaraay Language Practitioner

- Language is important for Aboriginal People in knowing their identity, place, Kin & Country: Language is sacred and connects everything together.
- Language and Culture are interconnected, with Language connecting Community to their Ancestors, Culture, Songlines, Lore and Country.
- Language is a critical way to keep Culture alive.
- Aboriginal Language practitioners spoke about the connection Language provides between them and their Ancestors and the way singing in Language heals Country and People.
- Language is used by Aboriginal Community members to honour those who have come before them and provides important life lessons for children and young people.
- Speaking Language empowers and strengthens Aboriginal Communities and is an act of decolonisation.
- Language helps Aboriginal Communities to reclaim their Culture, dignity and sovereignty, deal with ongoing oppression and trauma, and provides a sense of belonging and pride.

*"Language is who we are as a People and where we come from. Language is incorporated in everything Culturally that we do... Language is like the glue that holds everything together."* – Yuin Language Practitioner




# Language belongs to Country, Communities are the custodians

- Aboriginal Communities must be in control of their Languages and Language resources, including all decision-making to do with Languages.
- Communities are concerned that government has too much control over Languages.
- Respect for local ways of doing things is very important. This means listening and taking guidance from local Community members and Elders.
- Respect for Aboriginal Language knowledge holders (living and deceased) is essential.
- Cultural integrity in Language use is very important. Many Language practitioners felt they have a responsibility to make sure their Languages are spoken as authentically as possible to keep it 'straight and true'.
- Government departments and agencies wanted truth-telling and respect to be values of the Trust and for Aboriginal People to be the custodians of their Language.
- Government departments and agencies also wanted more recognition of the economic potential of Languages, such as providing career and business development opportunities, and for Aboriginal people to be the financial beneficiaries of their Languages.

***"We must have respect  
for surviving oral  
traditions and for the  
authenticity of the  
language recordings." –  
Gomeroi Language  
Practitioner***



- 
- Language sovereignty arose as a major topic. Communities gave different responses about whether their Language sovereignty was respected. For some, Language was not respected on their own Country or by the broader community, who may lack awareness and education about Language sovereignty, protocols, the diversity of Languages and what Language means.
  - Many reported being asked to share Language with various groups (e.g. for the naming of buildings or programs) but held concerns about it being a tokenistic gesture and their Language not being respected.
  - Community opinions vary about whether Languages should be taught in schools, TAFEs and universities. Some want mandatory teaching of Aboriginal Languages in schools and early childhood centres. Others are concerned that when Languages are taught in schools, Communities no longer have ownership or control of Languages. People spoke about the need to teach Language on Country with culture.
  - Another issue was that non-Aboriginal people are developing resources and becoming authorities on Languages or claiming ownership of Language. To ensure Language sovereignty is maintained, Communities want Language to be available to their people first, then the wider community.
  - Aboriginal Communities need to be able to access their Language without having to pay for it.



***“Our language belongs to our countries and our communities, not to NSW.”***

***Anaiwan Language Practitioner***





# Healing

- Many groups felt that truth telling needs to be part of Language work. There needs to be education and awareness about why Language was taken away and the importance of Language. This could also include good news stories about how Language was kept.
- Language practitioners and Aboriginal Community members spoke about Language reclamation as healing for them. The process of revitalising Language as a very emotional journey, which strengthens and binds Communities together.
- Language practitioners all spoke of the heavy responsibility to pass Language on to future generations to honour their Old People who were denied Language and the trauma that is linked to this. Some recalled growing up with Language being spoken around them and how learning it now helped them to understand conversations of the past.
- Language has the potential to be healing for Stolen Generations survivors, although they also stated that Languages can be painful and triggering for them.
- The Trust needs to take a trauma-informed approach.

*"The Old People had kids taken away because they spoke Language. Taking back Language and Culture is a really good way to heal." – Wiradjuri Language Practitioner*

*"Language wakes Country and people up, it unifies us and wakes up spirit and puts spirit back into Country, animals and ourselves." – Dharawal Language Practitioner*

*"It's beautiful to see how proud our Elders are when they see our kids speak in Language and how proud our kids are to have their family there watching them use Language." – Yuwaalaraay Language Practitioner*

*"There is a deep family connection in Language learning spaces. When we talk Language, we're all one big family, there is caring and support in that space." – Gathang Language Practitioner*



# Languages strong and used in everyday life

- All Language practitioners and Aboriginal Community members shared the same goal: to see their Languages living and spoken fluently in their Communities.
- Work must be done to ensure that Language is accessible to all Aboriginal People and that all Community members have the opportunity to learn Language.
- Language practitioners also spoke of revitalising Songlines and Kinship systems in Language.
- To make this happen, Communities need practical tools: Language centres, access to archives, access to Country, technology, Language programs developed and Language camps on Country.
- Some Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations saw Language learning as benefitting the wider Community and felt it should be learnt by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Some expressed caution - Aboriginal Communities need to be prioritised so they can share their Languages when they are ready.
- For Aboriginal children, Language gives them understanding of who they are and pride in their Culture. For non-Aboriginal children, Language gives them a unique perspective into Aboriginal Culture, which helps combat racism.



*"See our Songlines all singing again. The song of us as a people." - Yuwaalaraay Language Practitioner*

*"The goal is to empower Elders and Community with what they need to fully participate in Language revitalisation on Country." - Wanarruwa Language Practitioner*

*"[We want] Language fluency so that my family can share together in Gomeri." - Gomeri Language Practitioner*





*"Having a Language and Culture Centre in each Community. A place for Community to access Language and Language activities all to happen in one place."*

*- Gathang Language Practitioner*

*"A network of regional Language centres funded by the government. These centres should be replicas of Language centres that are working well in other regions (e.g. Muurrbay)."*

*- Gumbaynggirr Language Practitioner*

## Language Centres

- There were overwhelming requests for more Language Centres from all groups who were consulted.
- Language Centres would be Community owned, long-term projects, funded and resourced by government.
- Language Centres would be a hub where all Language work is carried out including research, linguistics, resource development, Language program design and delivery and free Community Language classes, including technology for online teaching.
- They should provide an outreach service for people who are off Country but want to learn their Language.
- Language Centres would also be a place to train and employ Language teachers.
- Language Centres would handle all requests for Language and give advice on Cultural and Intellectual Property.
- Access to land is essential so that Language can be taught in its fullest meaning, on Country.
- Language Centres would bring Community together and support Community connection and connection to Culture. Language centres could provide a safe space for Culture, teaching and learning Languages, sharing resources and knowledge, and be a keeping place.
- Language Centres would provide employment opportunities for local Community members.

# Access to Archives and Country

- Language Communities need local access to archives and artefacts to further their Language work.
- Some Language practitioners want Community controlled archival and keeping places so that archives and artefacts are repatriated and shared in a culturally appropriate way with the People Groups they originate from.
- Some Language practitioners wanted protocols developed by Custodians to control how archival information is accessed.
- Archives should be made available through a Community controlled online archive service with protocols built into it.
- Language Communities need access to Country to teach Language in its original context.
- The Trust should work with Language Communities to help them access their Country for Language revitalisation.

*"We have to walk country and talk to country and understand how language is formed so you can speak it."*

*– Darkinyung Language Practitioner*

*"We need access to archives in our Community, so we don't have to travel to AIATSIS or the National Library."*

*– Dharawal Language Practitioner*





*“Community Language Plans need extensive consultation with Community, having flexibility, conviction and strength”  
- Binaal Billa YarnUp Participant*

# Community Language Plans

- Community Language Plans were proposed as Language “Roadmaps”. Aboriginal Community members disliked the term ‘Roadmaps’, hence “Community Language Plans’ was adopted.
- Some Communities already have a plan in place, while others would like support in creating a plan.
- Community Language Plans need to be Community owned and driven and anchored in Community aspirations and needs.
- Community Language Plans must have funding attached to them.
- Because of the different levels of expertise in Communities, each Plan will need to be bespoke.
- Communities wanted their Plans to have a structure, goals and to be a ‘living document’ which is flexible and constantly evolving.
- Some saw Community Language Plans as a way to unite Communities by giving everyone the same vision for their Languages, which would ‘get everyone on the same page’.
- Having an endorsed, written Plan can help keep the Community on track, motivated and help to engage more Community members with their Languages by showing and acknowledging how much Language work has been done already in each Community.
- Plans could help inform people from outside Communities who work with or support Languages. Plans could help to articulate the key priorities of a Community and outline key Cultural protocols around the use of Language so that they are understood by funders and other stakeholders who could provide support. For example, Language plans could provide government with advice from Community.
- Some Communities would like to set up Language governance groups and the Trust could help to establish these.
- Communities were very interested in the way Plans could help them to learn from the Language work happening in other Communities.





# Funding

- All groups consulted agreed that NSW Government has a responsibility to provide long term and sustainable funding for the revitalisation of all Aboriginal Languages across the state.
- Funding for Language is considered reparations for the loss of Language caused by governments.
- Language work is long term, so long term investment respects each Community's Language journeys and gives Language workers job security..

*"Instead of a grant round being put out and having everyone compete over money for a short period of time, the Trust should have some sort of function of identifying organisations in Community that are doing this work and then approaching those organisations to find out what their needs are and help support them."*  
- Anaiwan Language Practitioner

*"Government has a moral obligation to invest funds in language revitalisation to the right groups. The government's role is to invest in a language outcome. This could be considered as compensation also. The government has to play a role to right the wrong of the past."*

- Dharawal Language Practitioner

- Language practitioners felt that Government institutions which are accessed by Aboriginal Communities could engage in more bilingual activities to support Language revitalisation.
- Funding application processes must be fair and accessible. Not all Communities have the time and skills to write detailed funding applications, and many find application processes challenging, confusing, onerous and time consuming

- The Trust should provide support for Communities to submit funding applications and accept applications via different methods such as paper based, online and verbal.
- Due to limited funding and the challenging application process, grants are very competitive. Competition creates division in Communities and deters some Communities from applying for grants. Due to strong competition, some feel there is no point in applying for grants. The result of these issues is that smaller organisations miss out on funding and there is a lack of diversity in successful applicants.
- Some Community members would like to see the Trust approach Communities, especially smaller ones, to offer funding.

*“Trust should give funding and resources to Community to do language the way they need and Trust shouldn’t make them accountable for anything, just let them do it the way they want it done. The success is that it happens, not the outcomes but that it’s being taught the way Community wants it.”*  
 – Yuwaalaraay Language Practitioner

*“Give us money to go out and do the Language work, compensate us for what they took away from us.”*  
 – Yuin Language Practitioner

- Levels of funding could be offered in different ways, such as Community size or Language maturity, or have a tier system for how much funding support different Languages need. Another suggestion was for the Trust to provide grants that align with the length of the Community Language Plan.
- Some Communities are looking to other methods of funding, such as philanthropic investment or corporate funding, or becoming self-reliant. The Trust may be able to provide support to establish these arrangements.

*“Government needs to finance Language revitalisation, buy land [for Language learning on Country] and build Language centres”*  
 – Gathang Language Practitioner





# Networks

- There is a strong need for networking between Language Communities so that people can connect, share and learn from each other.
- Many different types of networking arrangements were suggested, including networks between Language Communities, research and archival networks, linguist networks, IT networks, design and publishing networks and legal networks for Intellectual Property rights.
- Where one Language Community is dispersed across distances, there is interest in forming Language and teacher networks within the same Language group.
- Language revitalisation mentors could assist those who are earlier in their Language revitalisation journey to learn from those more advanced.
- Networking through Language conferences, workshops, camps and local Language groups would be valuable.
- Language practitioners also saw a need for networks with international Indigenous Language Communities.



*“Create a network of communities led by Language heroes that is safe – this will create a space where information can be shared comfortably.” – Bundjalung Language Practitioner*

*“Community networks, publishing, IP legal, graphic design, linguists are all skills-based backgrounds that can support Language work. Research networks, particularly for accessing archival material.” – Yorta Yorta Language Practitioner*





# Cultural and Intellectual Property

- Aboriginal Cultural and Intellectual Property (ACIP) is a pressing issue due to increased interest in Aboriginal Languages, growing requests for Language use (e.g. naming rooms in buildings) and Communities wanting to share Language knowledge safely.
- Communities are concerned that Language is being used without respect for Culture.
- Language should only be shared on Communities' terms.
- Language Communities need more information and support with their Cultural and Intellectual Property rights.
- At the same time, Government departments and others who want to engage with Languages need education about ACIP and ownership of Language.
- Many Language practitioners and Community members wanted their Language taught in schools and other educational institutions, but Languages must be taught by Language knowledge holders from within that Language Community and schools should not own or control Language material.

*"We had significant concern about releasing our Language resources because we were worried that they wouldn't be respected."  
– Gathang Language Practitioner*

*"It should be Aboriginal People teaching Language – they need to understand Culture to teach Language."  
– Darkinyung Language Practitioner*

*"Schools and TAFE should invest in Language being revitalised but they should not own that material."  
– Dharawal Language Practitioner*





## Trust – Community relationships

- As the Trust is a new agency, many are not aware of the work of the Trust and work is needed to raise awareness with Language Communities.
- Language Communities are keen to connect with the Trust and want to see it consulting and collaborating widely.
- The Trust needs to spend time in Communities listening to their needs. The Trust should have sustained engagement over time and work with local Communities to understand who needs to be engaged.
- The Trust could also lean into the advice of groups that are already established in each Community.
- The Trust should also use existing networks, such as the AECG and schools, to distribute information.
- Importantly, the Trust needs to have open and transparent communication with each Community.

*“Must have respect for and engage with Language speakers who are already on Country.”*

*– Bundjalung Language Practitioner*

*“The Trust needs to get out on Country to have the yarns and be experts at relationships, relationships need to exist before you want something and they have to continue after you get it.”*

*– Yuwaalaraay Language Practitioner*

- Some suggested that the Trust employ a Community engagement officer who visits and works with each Community so that community engagement is done in-person. This should be someone who is known and trusted by each Community.
- Community engagement should be authentic and inclusive of everyone in Community. The Trust should make sure that everyone in Community understands what the Trust’s role is and what services the Trust provides.
- Language practitioners and Community members felt that the Trust needed Community representation. The Trust could have a subcommittee or localised reference groups, which includes Language practitioners, so they stay connected to Communities. This subcommittee would inform the Trust and Board about local Language work. Localised reference groups would ensure Community have representation.



"A lot of my family would not go to TAFE. We need to teach our ways in Community on Country."  
- Wanarruwa Language Practitioner

"A language syllabus in schools shouldn't be optional."  
- Gathang Language Practitioner

Acquired Second Language Acquisition Workshop

Presented by Dr Greymorning



## Language Programs

- Community members want Language to be learnt through immersion, with an emphasis on speaking and learning Language through Cultural activities on Country.
- Language programs should be designed, owned by and delivered through Language custodians and Communities. Universities, TAFE and the Department of Education should contract Language Groups to deliver their own Language programs.
- Some Language practitioners emphasised that Language programs should focus on pronunciation and 'avoid corrupting our Languages'.
- Language programs should properly attribute the source of their knowledge.
- Some Language practitioners cautioned that formalised language training could exclude Community members from learning Language and emphasised the need for Community Language programs to be accessible to everyone.
- Language should be a core part of the school syllabus, with permanent Language programs in every school.
- Some Language practitioners thought that the Language Nest framework has the potential to work well because it seeks to involve the whole Community in the running of the Nest. Others felt that Language Nests failed to properly consult with Language knowledge holders and elders in the Community. Some were disappointed that the Language Nests didn't provide Language programs to all schools.
- Community wanted access to Language for families in their homes. Some people suggested focusing on Language programs for the first three years of early childhood.



# Languages Workforce

- There is a high demand for Language teachers and not enough people who have both Language skills and teaching qualifications.
- Some Community members felt that it shouldn't be necessary for Language teachers to have teaching qualifications, Language knowledge is a qualification on its own.
- Some Language practitioners felt that individuals should be assessed on their Language competency before they are permitted to teach a Language. Others felt that it should only be Aboriginal people teaching Language because cultural knowledge is necessary to teach Language.
- Many groups consulted raised concerns about whether Language teaching was a sustainable career. Language teacher salaries were seen as poor, and many teachers are overworked, and experience burn out. As a result, fewer people are opting for Language teaching careers.
- Those who do undertake Language qualifications need access to greater education and employment outcomes. Some Language practitioners would like to see Community members being paid to study Language courses.

*“Develop a language [and] culture sector that has a sustainable economic model to support communities. This needs investment across government to start with”  
– Gathang Language Practitioner*

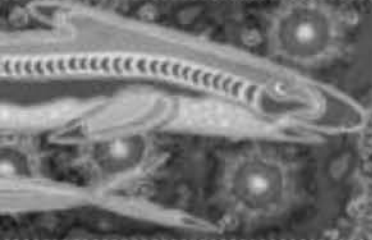
- Community members are concerned that people are teaching Language without Language Custodian consent. Communities called for Language qualifications and Language teacher protocols that are endorsed by Traditional Custodians.
- Schools are a major employer of people with Language qualifications, but this leaves fewer people available for other teaching work, such as Community classes.
- Language practitioners spoke about developing a Languages sector, with 'industry standards' for Language workers to be employed under an award.

*“In the next 10 years, I hope that Language has qualifications and protocols for teachers of Language that are endorsed by Traditional Custodians”. – Greater Sydney YarnUp Participant*





Grammar and dictionary of  
**Gathang**



Aranda Ussaragun

**Yaygirr**

Dictionary and Grammar



Compiled by  
Susan Marelli

**DHANGGATI**

WORD DICTIONARY WITH DHANGGATI STORIES



**Gumbaynggirr**

Dictionary and Learner's Grammar

Bijaarr Jandaygam, Ngaawa Gumbaynggirr



Steve Marelli

**The Dhurga Dictionary and Learner's Grammar**

A south-east coast, NSW Aboriginal Language



**Darkinyung**  
grammar and dictionary  
revitalising a language from history



# Research and resources

- Language practitioners and Community members would like to see more research on Languages, particularly in a NSW context.
- Research should look at the benefits of Aboriginal Language revival, best practice in Language teaching, and the prevalence of Language use across NSW.
- Research should be conducted in Communities with the engagement of Aboriginal researchers.
- Many Communities are not aware of the Language resources, such as archives and information, that are available to them.
- The Trust should support and resource communities to develop their Language resources.
- The Trust could provide a repository of Language resources that can be accessed by Language practitioners and where they can share information.
- Language communities and practitioners would also like further training in Language resource development.

*"We need access to professionals for free – legal, business, linguists, publishers." – Bundjalung Language Practitioner*

*"Previously, research conducted in Communities has traditional been held by the institutions and Community don't get the rights" - Illawarra South East YarnUp Participant*





***'The Voice of Country'***  
***by Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung***  
***artist Amy Allerton.***

At the beginning of creation, the land gave birth to Language, a living force, spreading out far and wide, connecting us to our creator, our Ancestors, our Country and our Culture. The voice of Country speaks to us through the water, the earth, the stars and the spirits of those past, present and future. The winds of Language travel through each tribe and Nation, it is diverse and yet it is one, bringing strength, Knowledge and healing. "The Voice of Country" tells the intertwined story of Identity and sovereignty.

It represents the foundation of Language which is ingrained in Culture, Community and Country across NSW, and speaks of the unyielding resilience of the world's oldest living Culture. It shows the inseparable nature of the physical, intellectual and spiritual manifestations of Language that shape the identity of Aboriginal peoples, and connects them to each other and the land. "The Voice of Country" is an invitation for all peoples to come together in partnership to share in the dawn of a new, enriched and thriving future, where Language is heard, people are seen, connection is strengthened and Culture is celebrated.



