

WRITING WORDS—RIGHT WAY!

Literacy and social practice

in the

Ngaanyatjarra world

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March 2007

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

(Anthropology)

of the

Australian National University

Introduction

In the previous chapter I began to show that pedagogy is only one influence on literacy by situating the Ngaanyatjarra within the ideological (and economic) time and place that surrounded people's literacy practices. In this chapter we see the effect of rapidly changing circumstances as the Ngaanyatjarra are removed from the paternalistic control of the mission and Native Welfare. We also start to see literacy outside institutional contexts and adults using the written word for their own social, cultural and political purposes. I represent this shift by moving away from the historical narrative structure used in previous chapters and turning the focus more onto individual and communal textual practices.

The election of a Federal Labor government under Gough Whitlam in 1972 ushered in the policy era of Aboriginal self-determination. Change had already begun after the State Labor government, elected in 1971, prioritised the dismantling of most of the remaining legislation which treated Aborigines differently from other members of the community. The functions of the Department of Native Welfare were absorbed by the Department of Community Welfare (DCW) and in 1972 an Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority (AAPA) was formed to carry out functions not handled by other government departments.⁶¹⁸ 'Self-determination' was a new policy frame where equity and equal opportunity began to hinge upon the self-managing capacity of Aboriginal people. From the 1970s the social and political landscape at Warburton and across the Goldfields was dramatically transformed.

'When the new things came in'—self-determination and change

The UAM relinquished control of Warburton Ranges Mission between 1972 and 1973. This opened up the opportunity for Ngaanyatjarra people to re-form and collectively use their acquired skills and practices, inclusive of literacy, to reshape a new 'community of interest'. Warburton Community was incorporated in 1973, AAPA and the DCW took on the administration of the community and Scott and Co. was designated to appoint the first 'community advisor'. The role of the missionaries was superseded, no longer the administrative backbone of the community, and their caregiving role made redundant, they now focused on Scripture translation, teaching literacy and providing language services to the new non-Aboriginal staff.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁸ (Bolton 1981: 167).

⁶¹⁹ *United Aborigines Messenger* September 1973; *United Aborigines Messenger* March/April 1984.

The transition to government administration corresponded with community unrest. The Federal government's implementation of award wages when in employment, otherwise eligibility for the full range of social security payments including UB, had contributed to high unemployment in the Goldfields.⁶²⁰ At Warburton the minimal availability of work and a 'surplus' of UB or 'free money', combined with unrestricted access to alcohol, aggravated law and order problems.⁶²¹ Central desert people in the Goldfields were also dispersed and fragmented by change and alcohol. Ngaanyatjarra youth from the hostels, unable to find employment in the Goldfields then drifted back to Warburton:

These are young people who feel unwanted in White society and so return to their own community only to find they do not have the tools with which to demonstrate the new skills they have learned...nor do they have a means of livelihood except finding methods of extracting pension money from elders...Generally speaking, neither parents nor children can see any real purpose in White Australian education.⁶²²

Warburton in the 1970s is remembered by locals as, 'lots of people, need things, new things, new buildings'. In 1972 housing was promised within six months by the Federal Minister for the newly-established Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA). However, by the time Senator Cavanagh visited Warburton in 1974, only staff housing had been erected and people were still living in *wilja* constructions.⁶²³ Where mobility had previously allowed for dispersal, the intensive aggregation of extended family and more distant classificatory kin tended to amplify disharmony between groups from different country. In 1975 the various pressures reached a crescendo culminating in a 'rampage of destruction'.⁶²⁴

When anthropologist Nicolas Peterson visited the Central Reserve in 1970 he found only 5% of the population working at Warburton, whereas at Docker River 23% worked.⁶²⁵ At Warburton 'there was neither money available to pay people nor projects for them to work on'.⁶²⁶ At Docker, workers were paid more under the NT 'Training Allowance', instituted to assist the newly-established NT government settlements in employing Aboriginal

⁶²⁰ (Sanders 1986: 285).

⁶²¹ (Green 1976).

⁶²² (Douglas 1978: 117).

⁶²³ (Douglas 1978).

⁶²⁴ (Douglas 1978).

⁶²⁵ (Peterson 1977: 138–140). Government settlements in the Northern Territory were established in reaction to the displacement of Aboriginal people after the advent of the awarding of equal wages in 1968. Docker River government settlement was established in 1967–1968. During the mission time many Ngaatjatjarra, Ngaanyatjarra and Pitjantjatjara people from country around the Petermann Ranges and Rawlinson Ranges area of the Central Reserve had gone across to Warburton Ranges. The opening of the settlement at Docker River allowed people to return to country (Woenne 1977) and lessened the pressure on Warburton, as Docker River served a 'de facto homeland function' (Brooks 2002a). Around 1969 Docker River helped to resource people living at Giles, Wingellina, Mt Fanny and Blackstone. Over the ensuing years many of Ngaatjatjarra and Ngaanyatjarra families then returned to the nascent outstations on the WA side of the border at Warakurna (Giles), and subsequently at Tjukurla.

⁶²⁶ (Peterson 1977: 139).

workers in capital works programmes.⁶²⁷ With minimal training or employment opportunities available at Warburton, many young adults who had been trained in the Goldfields moved on to the NT and SA for work.⁶²⁸ George recalls:

They worked around there, Northern Territory, from here, worked around Docker River...they was all working up there. Different from here, went over there working when they start the new settlement in Docker River, even Amata. Some like from Docker River been going to school in the mission here...they shift back to Docker River from Warburton and they help build that place up too. And over in Amata way, like from South Australia way...they grow up here, been to school here, been to Pedlar's too, so they know. They went back to South Australia side, they build up their communities like Irrunytju, Mt Davies, Kalka.

Clem, like many others, went to Docker River in 1970 for 'more money':

When I turned 19 years old people looked upon me to be an interpreter because I speak English because I know how to read and write. I started being a main figure in Docker River...once Australia changed for stockmen we can't get paid well, so we all went to South Australia and Northern Territory because we was getting more money than for working in [Warburton] Laverton, Leonora, all that.

It can be speculated that these experiences further reinforced the sense among people that they had been workers in the mainstream labour market. Moreover, as Rowse suggests, around this time there was 'a propensity' for people to be unable to distinguish between the source and purpose of the various new cash pathways: wages, training allowances, UB and other social service benefits.⁶²⁹

The inception of CDEP

In order to ameliorate unemployment at Warburton, a Regional Employment Development Scheme was initially implemented.⁶³⁰ After training at Wongutha Farm and Pedlar's, Jim worked in the mines in Kalgoorlie and at Wongutha Wonganarra in Laverton, before returning to Warburton.⁶³¹ He recalls:

No work was round until the mission handed over the thing to government, place turned into a settlement...Then they all started building, putting drains and pipes and that time we started working now. Helping get things down, hospital, putting down the floor...Them old people...telling the people to start work 'cause there's all these new things coming. And this mission gonna finish and this change, they keep changing all the time.

⁶²⁷ The building of settlements such as Docker River and Papunya required the input of a large Aboriginal labour force for the required capital works programs—road works, building of houses, airstrips, sewerage works etc. Aboriginal labour was used not only because it was cheap but also as a deliberate Native Administration Branch educational policy to 'instil in as many residents as possible a realization of the necessity of paid employment in a 'normal' way of life' (Rowse 1998: 172). However the payment of basic wages to settlement workers was to prove too expensive and a compromise was reached in 1969 whereby a small number of workers would be employed at award rates and the rest would be remunerated with a lesser cash 'training allowance'. Training allowances were replaced in 1973–1974 by UB as the move from rations to cash on NT settlements had 'precipitated a crisis of family poverty' (Rowse 1998: 175–8).

⁶²⁸ WA SRO Acc 1733 66/65—*Warburton Ranges native matters Report Superintendent of Economic Development to CNW 1965*.
⁶²⁹ (Rowse 1998: 179).

⁶³⁰ This was a precursor to Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) and designed specifically for remote Aboriginal Australia. It was sponsored by the Minister for Labor and Immigration, Clyde Cameron, and was designed to stimulate employment at the local government level (Lloyd and Troy 1981: 228).

⁶³¹ In 1973, with the support of AAPA the Laverton community established 'Wongutha Wonganarra' an early initiative in self-management that gave Aborigines training and work experience (Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) Western Australia Newsletter Vol.1, No.7 July 1974: 27–30).

Then in 1977, the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) was implemented as an employment and training initiative to meet the unusual requirements of remote communities.⁶³² According to Rowse, it was also 'a response to anxieties about the moral consequences of remote people's sudden access to unemployment benefits paid to individuals'.⁶³³ CDEP was initiated to ameliorate the conundrum faced by remote communities which 'do not form part of the open labour market'.⁶³⁴

In 1977 H.C. Coombs recommended that the desert communities of Warburton, Wingellina, Blackstone, Giles and Jameson be included in the 'experimental phase' of CDEP.⁶³⁵ Another of the original CDEP projects was initiated at Wiluna Desert Farm and Emu Farm to improve the socioeconomic aspects of community life, reduce the 'damaging effect' of alcohol, increase training and develop general employment skills, and 'assist community members to manage their own affairs'.⁶³⁶ This early model was 'not simply a means of providing employment as a source of a minimum cash income, but a training exercise in self-management and increasing independence' to enable Aborigines to do work chosen by the community to strengthen economic independence and the quality of life.⁶³⁷

The scheme is based on the provision of funds for employment projects approximately equivalent to the total unemployment benefits that would be payable should all eligible Aborigines apply for such benefits. It has enabled the communities concerned to plan projects for their direct benefit and has removed the socially debilitating effect of 'sit down' money.⁶³⁸

Around this time Warburton had 500 on UB and Damian McLean recalls:

No-one would receive any pay for weeks then suddenly people would receive a big cheque in backpay and people would take it and go into town and blow it, better now as averaged out into a regular income. Child endowment was a mess to as it was irregularly paid. At that time the office in Warburton had no doors, no windows, experiencing the breakdown of everything. CDEP, and the CDEP on-costs was a primary factor in the stabilization of Warburton: 'CDEP allowed for on-costs of 10% which was sufficient to begin providing admin support for the community, an office, record keeping, admin assistance and a site for mail deposit'.⁶³⁹

⁶³² CDEP evolved out of a 1976 Federal government interdepartmental working party on Aboriginal employment (DAA 1976: v).

⁶³³ (Rowse 1998: 215).

⁶³⁴ *Hansard* 'Aboriginal Employment' 26 May 1977: 1921.

⁶³⁵ (Coombs 1977).

⁶³⁶ Annual Report Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority (AAPA) and Aboriginal Lands Trust (ALT) 1977: 9. By 1973, after the departure of the Seventh Day Adventists, Wiluna went through a transformation. The mission was renamed 'the Village' and the old reserve 'Bondini' and proper housing was built with electricity and running water. By the end of 1974 AAPA had acquired Emu Farm and Desert Farm on behalf of the newly formed Ngangganawili Community. By 1976 the Desert Gold citrus and melon farm had developed and the community was ready to embark on a process of self-management. These ventures became the genesis of the new CDEP. During the 1980s the demography of Wiluna had changed, whereas in the 1970s the majority were away at school or station work for extensive periods of time, by this time the Aboriginal population was resident in Wiluna (Annual Report AAPA and ALT 1976: 9); (Sackett 1990).

⁶³⁷ (Coombs 1977: 1-2).

⁶³⁸ Annual Report AAPA and ALT 1978: 9.

⁶³⁹ Damian McLean commenced work in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands in 1982. He has been Community Development Advisor at Warburton community for many years. He is also Shire President of the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku and Justice of the Peace. During this time he has worked closely with Ngaanyatjarra people in establishing much of the infrastructure and governance procedures in the region.

Coombs found Warburton people united in complaining that '[t]here is no work here and nothing to stay for and we want to go back bush'.⁶⁴⁰ CDEP was integral in providing the economic foundation to support the establishment of the new outstations.

'Homeland time'—outstations and the return to country

Affiliation to country was the main factor that drove the outstation movement, with the older generation determining the location of new communities. The four new communities of *Irrunytju* (Wingellina), *Papulankutja* (Blackstone), *Warakurna* (Giles) and *Mantamaru* (Jameson) in effect covered 'the huge, previously uncatered-for region between Amata in the east and Warburton in the west' (see Chapter 1, Fig. 1.1).⁶⁴¹ The homelands movement also relieved the pressure of overcrowding in Warburton and fulfilled the desire for greater autonomy and control.⁶⁴² It was also the magnet that attracted Ngaanyatjarra and Pitjantjatjara people, who had earlier drifted east to Ernabella Mission and subsequently to Amata, back to Wingellina and Blackstone—their traditional homelands on the Western Australian side.⁶⁴³ In the 1970s Warburton was, in fact, outside the main political action stirred by the outstation movement and the push for land rights coming from South Australian returnees.⁶⁴⁴ The outstation movement was also to attract Ngaanyatjarra people back from the new NT settlements and from the Goldfields. Table 4.1 provides an indication of population movement during this period. As Green notes students that he taught in 1966 later 'travelled beyond the Western Desert', to Laverton, Alice Springs and the far north 'seeking work or attending ceremonies', but 'the yearning for the home country' brought all but a few back.⁶⁴⁵

In some cases, the determination to return to country was so great that people shifted without adequate resources or assistance from non-Aboriginal staff; for example, it was not until 1975 that Blackstone, Jameson, Wingellina and Warakurna received funding for Community Advisors. This is exemplified in a 1973 letter of request for outstation services

⁶⁴⁰ (Coombs 1974: 10).

⁶⁴¹ (Brooks 2002a: 10).

⁶⁴² Wingellina, Warakurna, Jameson and Blackstone communities were incorporated in 1976. Kiwirrkura (incorporated in 1984) was formed around 1982 when Pintupi people returned west from Papunya and Kintore in the NT. Tjukurla (incorporated 1987) was formed with people coming mainly from Docker River or Warakurna. Ngaatjatjarra speakers from Docker River had established an outstation at Tjukurla in the early 1970s, however lack of services meant that a permanent settlement was not established until 1986. Tjirrkarli (incorporated in 1987) was established by people mainly from Warburton, Cosmo and the Mungili/Wiluna area. People from Wanarn (incorporated 1989) came mainly from Warburton, although more recently families from Laverton and Mt Margaret have returned to the area. Patjarr was settled mainly by the Gibson Desert families. Cosmo was re-established in 1989 and came under the Ngaanyatjarra Council. Kanpa community was initially established as a bail facility/substance abuse centre for locally-located juveniles and adults (Ngaanyatjarra Council 2000).

⁶⁴³ (Hamilton 1987; Wallace 1990).

⁶⁴⁴ Brooks—Interview 15/8/04. See also (Toyne and Vachon 1984).

⁶⁴⁵ (Green 1983: 113).

discussed below. As a consequence, locals were required to take on roles and responsibilities and 'they were able to go that extra step'.⁶⁴⁶

The people who were in the developing communities, they filled a really crucial part, those ones who had more education, at Blackstone, Jameson, Warakurna and so on. Like XX and XX used to run the shop. [He] was completely illiterate, but he had always worked alongside the storekeeper in Warburton so he knew a lot about shops, but she went away to Kalgoorlie High School.⁶⁴⁷

Table 4.1 Estimated population Ngaanyatjarra Lands 1972–1983

	Warburton	Cosmo Newbery	Wingellina	Warakurna	Jameson	Blackstone	Total population
1972	408	70	-	-	-	-	478
1973	435	65	51	-	-	-	551
1974	438	75	16	31	-	-	560
1975	251	62	70	165	120	155	823
1976	273	68	94	201	110	166	912
1977	350	53	85	97	126	134	845
1978	350	68	85	97	126	134	860
1979	230	26	120	150	210	100	836
1980	400	130	110	100	180	100	1020
1981	400	80	130	200	210	100	1120
1982	573	62	130	102	222	104	1193
1983	453	72	133	147	102	91	998

Source: Annual Report DNW 1972
Annual Reports AAPA and ALT 1973–1983

Some young adults returned with English language and literacy, a familiarity with European practices and a sense of themselves as workers.

They are people that have sort of been leading lights in their communities and in the area like Teacher Aides, Health Workers and Council Chair people. They would have had that foundation from school here but that was built on by their experiences away from their communities. They saw a bit more of the outside world. They had a greater opportunity than what exists today when they did come back to sort of participate in more meaningful work in the community.⁶⁴⁸

Wesley reflects on the process:

You go and work for white man and they speak to you in their language and you get to understand and you keep picking it all up. You can understand the whole system...But they did spend a lot of time learning before they had to take responsibility.

With so few white staff locals were integral to the community building process irrespective of education or literacy competence. Hackett recalls that in the 1970s 'people were working together to make it happen, whitefella staff were like family' and community consultation and Ngaanyatjarra language interpreting were expected. People recollect working in stores, schools and making the cut-line road from Warburton to Warakurna.

I start looking for job, I went back to Warakurna when they start that little community and I was thinking, oh I'll be starting work, so I straight out work in the store, running the store and all the other things and all. Was easy to get jobs before...Before just used the money like in a little box.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁶ Wells—Interview 1/4/04.

⁶⁴⁷ Glass and Hackett— Interview 8/5/04.

⁶⁴⁸ Wells—Interview 1/4/04.

⁶⁴⁹ Data from (Kral and Ward 2000).

April recalls that when her family shifted from Cosmo to Tjirrkarli in the early 1980s there was only one staff member so they took more responsibility:

We had no school there so I start up for school there, in a little shed, used to teach all the little kids there, mainly I was teaching numbers and writing, and a little bit of reading because they used to bring books down from Warburton School and leave it there...I kept on saying: 'We'll have a school here anytime, so you got to learn how to count, learn how to read, and learn how to write.' That was the most important one for kids.

Similarly, when Wesley's family returned to Cosmo in 1989 they established a school.⁶⁵⁰ With the benefit of hindsight, Wells suggests that in comparison with the present there appeared to be 'more job opportunities' then and more locals were employed in the offices, stores and schools because their skills matched the requirements of the job. However, as I explore in Chapter 7, these experiences did not prepare people for modernity and the complexity of the post-1970s work environment.

Finally, around 1990, the Ngaatjatjarra-speaking Gibson Desert families heard that Warburton community was establishing an outstation at Patjarr and many returned from Wiluna. The Warburton mob said, 'we've got money now, you mob got to come back to country and set up homelands'.⁶⁵¹ Despite the ravages of alcohol and some conflict and 'fragmentation' in the community, many in this group had been workers on stations around Leonora and Wiluna, and under the self-managing ethos of the Ngangganawili Community and CDEP at Desert Farm and Emu Farm.⁶⁵² They returned with confidence, skills and experience and had retained a strong ceremonial connection.⁶⁵³ In addition, their children had been educated. Marrkilyi reflects on the impact of the Wiluna experience:

It made us more savvy to working with whitefellas, speaking English and being more vocal, you don't sit back, you get up and do things. And because we've been away from country it makes us more stronger about going back to our lands and looking after country.⁶⁵⁴

In summary, despite the chaos, this period also generated an optimism that through self-determination the Ngaanyatjarra would gain control of their communities. Many returned

⁶⁵⁰ After 1972 Cosmo Newbery passed from UAM to AAPA jurisdiction. It remained a functional pastoral station under the direction of UAMO Inc, the industrial branch of the UAM, constituted in the 1960s to provide for the placing of skilled workers to train Aborigines in new industries, transport and the management of trading stores (Douglas 1978). However the close proximity to Laverton saw an increase in fighting and money spent on alcohol rather than food and clothing for families (UAMO Inc Cosmo Newbery Annual Report June 1972 NTU files 6/1972). Eventually Cosmo reached 'a state of crisis' with little employment and drinkers travelling regularly between Laverton and Warburton (*United Aborigines Messenger* June 1979: 9). Although resolution came when the UAM handed Cosmo over to DAA in 1979, the situation continued to deteriorate (*United Aborigines Messenger* July/August 1980: 14). DAA eventually withdrew funding and many residents decamped to Tjirrkarli, one of the newly formed outstations from Warburton, and Cosmo lay dormant for a number of years. Then in 1989 Wesley's family returned to re-establish Cosmo Newbery community (Family A).

⁶⁵¹ Marrkilyi E. pers. comm. April 2004. See also (Brooks 2002e).

⁶⁵² (Sackett 1977; Sackett 1990).

⁶⁵³ (Sackett 1978a).

⁶⁵⁴ Marrkilyi E. pers. comm. April 2004.

to their desert home and entered the era of self-determination armed with sufficient skills and knowledge to forge a new political landscape.

Literacy and 'self-determination'

Under self-determination the Ngaanyatjarra were to encounter an entirely different conceptualisation of Western education, one that mirrored the new optimism about Aboriginal education across remote Australia.⁶⁵⁵ Previously, schooling had been intertwined with paternalistic control under the mission and then Native Welfare. The compulsion element of mission schooling and Native Welfare was dependent on the authorising outsider telling people what to do. The Ngaanyatjarra adapted to the regulatory framework of compulsory schooling as normative and families were not required to discipline their own or others' children or compel each other to take action. In Ngaanyatjarra sociality it remains difficult for adults to act compel others to take action (and grandparents and parents are increasingly unable to assert control in the contemporary milieu). Self-determination was to thrust people into a changed policy environment with a model of schooling underpinned by individual control. In the ensuing period, with virtually no prior experience, families were expected to compel their children to attend school and undertake the training that would lead to self-management outcomes.

Now that the people have assumed recognition as being controllers and organisers of their affairs, it becomes important that they be able to read and write. The old people will never accomplish this, but an adequate reading skill becomes vital to the younger generation, because they will finally occupy a position of importance in the community, and their leadership success will depend very

⁶⁵⁵ The election of a Federal Labor government changed Aboriginal education policy in remote Australia, including the beginning of official bilingual education programmes. Additionally the 1970s saw the development of special training, in-services and courses in Aboriginal Education. In WA these were offered at Mt Lawley Teachers' College and Graylands Teachers College and relevant resources and curriculum materials were developed and the WA Education Department funded the development of Aboriginal specific curriculum materials and resources including the 'Warburton Readers', a series of basic readers for Warburton Ranges school (*DAA Newsletter* (Western Australia), Vol. 1, No. 9 December 1974: 14–17). Prior to this, comparatively little had been written about Aboriginal languages in relation to literacy and education outside of missionary, Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) and linguistic circles (Gale 1997; Wurm 1963). Following the Watts and Gallacher Report (Watts and Gallacher 1964) investigating appropriate curriculum and methodology for Aboriginal schools in the NT, an openness to the idea of first language instruction emerged, deriving from the 1953 UNESCO axiom that the best medium of instruction in school was the mother tongue of the pupil (Bull 1964; Edwards 1969). After 1972, bilingual education was introduced in some Aboriginal schools in the NT (Wurm 1971; O'Grady and Hale 1974). This created a need for adults literate in their vernacular to be the teachers, writers and literature production workers (Goddard 1990). Vernacular adult literacy courses were held at the School of Australian Linguistics and SIL. Bilingual theory was drawn from international contexts (Cummins and Swain 1986; Fishman 1989b; Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins 1988) and the literature investigating teaching in comparable international Indigenous minority contexts (Dumont 1972; McLaughlin 1989; Philips 1972; Wolcott 1967). Through the 1970s, 1980s and into the 1990s, linguistics started to impact on education research with explorations in domain theory, code-switching and cross-cultural communication (McConvell 1988; Walsh and Yallop 1993; Harkins 1990; Harkins 1994). Australian research also addressed linguistic and conceptual issues particular to Aboriginal children who did not speak Standard Australian English (Brumby and Vaszolyi 1977; Eagleson et al. 1982; Kaldor 1980; Malcolm 1998; NLLIA 1996). After December 1998 the NT government discontinued resourcing a formal bilingual programme in NT schools, although some flexibility for the inclusion of language and culture maintenance programmes remains within the NT Curriculum Framework (NT Curriculum Framework Team 2001). A bilingual programme continued in the Pitjantjatjara Lands schools until 1990 when the communities requested that the SA Education Department provide an English only literacy programme (Rose 2001). In WA bilingual programmes have generally only been supported by independent schools, including those in the Catholic system. See (Gale 1997; Hartman and Henderson 1994; Hoogenraad 2001) for descriptions of Aboriginal bilingual programmes.

largely upon their abilities in skills fields, and particularly in their degree of reading accomplishment.⁶⁵⁶

Unrealistic expectations of what education could achieve were again generated and this has led to ongoing frustration:

If people had actually said: 'I'd like to be able to read and write', but there was all this pressure on that skills transfer, jobs transfer that the whites have got to get out of here and this has led to a grudging resentment towards staff and their role.⁶⁵⁷

As the following quote from Clem suggests, the resentment can also be sourced to the earlier assimilation ideology:

We came back from Wongutha Farm, from the high schools, ladies was sent to Fairhaven and we all came back to Warburton, [but] they didn't give us the opportunity to make Aboriginal people advance towards, advancement.

Education facilities at outstation schools were initially rudimentary and by 1978 there were only two itinerant non-Aboriginal staff with minimal Education Department funding.⁶⁵⁸

'Poor' school results were commonly attributed to the 'increasing mobility between the outcamps and Warburton'. The 'migratory habits of the people' were considered 'detrimental to the continued education of children'.⁶⁵⁹

One of the problems facing the success of the program is the irregular attendance of children at school. This is brought about by the high truancy rate of children while they are at Warburton and the fact that most children itinerate between Warburton and the neighbouring outstation communities, constituting frequent breaks in the continuity of their education.⁶⁶⁰

From a sociocultural perspective, however, this period can be interpreted differently. Over previous generations people had experienced a profound reconfiguring of socio-spatial relations on the mission or in the stations, hostels, towns and reserves of the Goldfields. With the outstation movement came 'a huge pent up release of energy' as people reasserted autonomy and control emanating from the empowerment gained by reconnecting to country.⁶⁶¹ This generation of school children, the self-determining generation, were immersed in this experience. They were to observe the strength and agency of their parents and grandparents, who with varying levels of education and literacy, worked in the schools and stores, built the infrastructure and asserted leadership responsibility. This generation were also to experience the turbulent social disruptions of the 1970s and 1980s.

⁶⁵⁶ School Policy Warburton Ranges 1974—NTU Archives: Education File.

⁶⁵⁷ McLean—Interview 9/9/04.

⁶⁵⁸ (Kral and Ward 2000).

⁶⁵⁹ (Green 1983: 112); School Policy Warburton Ranges 1974—NTU Archives: Education File.

⁶⁶⁰ Warburton Ranges Special Aboriginal School: School Policy 1979—NTU Archives: Education File.

⁶⁶¹ Brooks—Interview 15/8/04.

Vernacular literacy

Throughout the 1970s the Ngaanyatjarra adult literacy programme continued. From 1974 to 1978 Glass taught both semi-literate and illiterate men and women, however 'few of the illiterates made any significant progress'.⁶⁶² From 1972 annual short-term Bible Schools for adults and children were held.⁶⁶³ It is interesting to compare attitudes. Observers note the 'growing demand' for adult literacy and the 'astounding' number of children attending a holiday Bible school.⁶⁶⁴ In contrast, school educators were pessimistic about the development of English literacy:

Reading has to be recognised for the important skill that it is, and especially in the light of the developing situation at Warburton. Unfortunately, reading, for various reasons, does not seem to be integrated into the thinking of the children as being a worthwhile skill. Seldom is any in-depth attention paid to reading material. There is a tendency for children to look at books and magazines, skimming rapidly over the pages as they go. The article is then flung in the direction of the storage area, another book is grabbed, and the process repeats itself. This method, implying carelessness and lack of interest, denies comprehension opportunities.⁶⁶⁵

Contemporaneously, the missionaries were itinerating in the new outstation communities and selling Christian reading material and cassettes. At Docker River people bought 'hymnbooks, Bible portions and other Christian literature' and at Blackstone 'one keen Christian leader...conducts services every Sunday and prayer meetings every morning'.⁶⁶⁶ On another visit, 'a group of school girls ran after me to buy books and Hymn books, "Just to practice!"', and one man 'bought books for all those at his camp'.⁶⁶⁷ By 1977 a ministry was established at Warakurna.⁶⁶⁸

Significantly, it was at this time that a body of secular texts—traditional stories and children's books—in Ngaanyatjarra and English also evolved, in addition to the ongoing production of Christian texts.⁶⁶⁹ Materials were produced for the new school bilingual programme and a community newspaper.

In 1974, the WA Education Department approved the introduction of a pilot Bilingual Education Programme at Warburton School in tandem with an Aboriginal Teacher Aides

⁶⁶²(Glass 2000: 3).

⁶⁶³ (Blackett 1997: 152).

⁶⁶⁴ *United Aborigines Messenger* February 1976: 10; *United Aborigines Messenger* December 1976: 16–19

⁶⁶⁵ School Policy Warburton Ranges 1974—NTU Archives: Education File.

⁶⁶⁶ *United Aborigines Messenger* December 1974: 8.

⁶⁶⁷ *United Aborigines Messenger* March 1978: 5.

⁶⁶⁸ *United Aborigines Messenger* November 1977: 11.

⁶⁶⁹ Ngaanyatjarra literacy materials produced by 1974 included some 32 booklets on cultural, educational and religious subjects totalling 350 pages of reading material (Glass 1974). During the 1990s Hackett produced a series of eleven Christian Education books and a number of Ngaanyatjarra writers, story-tellers and illustrators had stories published through *Tjaa Yuti* Books (Books in our Language). Publications by Ngaanyatjarra authors include (Butler 1993; Glass and Newberry 1990 [1979]; Richards 1997). Other publications include: *Mama Kuurruku Wangka Marlangkatjanya: The New Testament in Ngaanyatjarra and English* (Ngaanyatjarra Bible Project 1999); *Turku Pirinya* (Ngaanyatjarra Bible Project 2003); *Ngaanyatjarra and Ngaatjarra to English Dictionary* (Glass and Hackett 2003) and *Tjilkuku-tjanampa tjukurpa*

Scheme.⁶⁷⁰ The programme was developed by Glass and Hackett along with Murray Wells and local Teacher Aides.⁶⁷¹ Previously, children had attended schools where the medium of instruction was unknown and the learning of literacy was inhibited by linguistic and sociolinguistic factors.⁶⁷² At the time children in Grade 7 had literacy proficiency at Grade 3 level.⁶⁷³ The bilingual programme provided a focus for increased Ngaanyatjarra literacy production. In 1974, three Warburton men attended a 'Creative Writers Workshop' at SIL in Darwin.⁶⁷⁴ The event was acclaimed as a significant moment in literacy advancement.⁶⁷⁵ Prior to the workshop none of the men could read or write in Ngaanyatjarra, and only a little in English, yet by the end they were able to write 'imaginative stories of high quality'.

Surely here is the beginning of a body of literature written by the people and for the people...we as Christian missionaries should be teaching the people to produce and enjoy good literature for themselves, as well as encouraging them to read and enjoy the Book of books.⁶⁷⁶

The bilingual programme was short-lived and had ceased by 1980.⁶⁷⁷

A Ngaanyatjarra-English community newsletter '*Warburtonngamartatji Tjukurrpa* – Warburton News' was produced from 1973 to 1980 as an initiative of the newly formed AAPA community council to communicate information on the new agencies and changes (Fig. 4.1).

When I worked on the community newspaper I used to get all the stories first, reading it into English, get it into my *kata* (in my head) and *kuliku* (think about it) and then follow the English line and translate it. Like that *palyalpayi* (that's how I did it). It was easy for me, I just picked it up quickly, self (*yungarra*).⁶⁷⁸

walykumunu: The children's book of wonderful stories (Hackett 2004), as well as (Glass and Hackett 1979 [1969]; Glass 1980; Glass 1997; Glass 2006).

⁶⁷⁰ (Gray 1975).

⁶⁷¹ In 1973 Glass attended a workshop in Darwin with Sarah Gudschinsky (Gudschinsky 1973). Subsequently, in consultation with Douglas and the few Ngaanyatjarra literates, changes were made to Douglas' original Ngaanyatjarra orthography – diacritics were removed, and replaced by digraphs to represent the retroflex consonants; and 'rr' was to be used to represent the alveolar flap/trill (Glass 2000: 1). The retroflex sounds are still represented with diacritics (ɺ, ɺɺ, ɺɺɺ) in Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara (Goddard 1987) and Pintupi-Luritja (Heffernan and Heffernan 2000). The school curriculum used the Ngaanyatjarra primers *Nintirriwa-la Wangkaku* designed using principles from the SIL Gudschinsky method for teaching vernacular literacy to 'preliterate people' (Glass 1973: 8).

⁶⁷² (Glass 1973).

⁶⁷³ (Glass 1974).

⁶⁷⁴ (Glass 2000: 3).

⁶⁷⁵ DAA Newsletter (Western Australia), Vol.1, No.8 September 1974; *United Aborigines Messenger* September 1974.

⁶⁷⁶ *United Aborigines Messenger* September 1974: 3.

⁶⁷⁷ There is a widely held belief among educators and researchers that learners like the Ngaanyatjarra are profoundly disadvantaged if there is no bilingual programme or second language immersion environment. In the 1996 *Desert Schools Report* (NLLIA 1996) linguists and educators investigated the difficulties that speakers of Aboriginal languages, including Ngaanyatjarra, and non-standard English dialects encounter when learning to crack the English written code.⁶⁷⁷ They conclude that literacy learning problems arise because non-Aboriginal teachers are inadequately trained in language teaching methodology. Additional problems arise because Aboriginal teachers and language workers receive little or no linguistic training to enable them to explain the phonological, grammatical, semantic and pragmatic aspects of their own language, nor can they articulate the differences between the oral discourse properties of Ngaanyatjarra and the highly nominalised English written system. See also (Harris 1990b; Harris 1990a; Harris 1991; Hartman and Henderson 1994; Hoogenraad 2001; McConvell 1991a; Walton 1993).

⁶⁷⁸ Lalla West 2002 in (Plant and Viegas 2002: 59).

Information of local social and cultural relevance could now be accessed in a textual mode. The newsletter reported community news and the coming and going of community members, including staff. For families returning to country, the newspaper performed an important social function. At one point a letter requesting a copy of *Warburtonngamartatji Tjukurrpa* was sent from a community member in Jameson with an enclosed sum of money, illustrating that information of a secular nature was being sought through written text. The newsletter provides a glimpse into issues that mattered, including the visits of a ‘confusing multiplication of administrators and advisors’⁶⁷⁹:

Why is it that we in this place keep getting a surprise when we see cars and Europeans and aeroplanes coming and going? I will tell you the news so that some of us won't be ignorant all the time. That's why we are writing this newspaper so that you will all be able to read it and know what is happening.⁶⁸⁰

Over eight years at least 40 editions were produced. They recorded the transformation from the mission era through ‘government time’ and the embryonic beginnings of the Ngaanyatjarra community of interest.⁶⁸¹ A community newsletter was also started by SIL linguists in 1991, and Ngaanyatjarra Council later produced eight editions of the *Ngaanyatjarra News*, between 1996 and 2001.⁶⁸² Print media has now, in part, been made redundant by the immediacy of short-wave two-way radio and the advent of radio, video and TV—forms of oral and visual communication that fit cultural processes.⁶⁸³

In 1982 doctrinal differences between the remaining missionaries and the UAM arose. Douglas resigned and the UAM Language Department in Kalgoorlie ceased to operate. Glass and Hackett shifted to Alice Springs to concentrate on translation work under the banner of the Ngaanyatjarra Bible Project (Fig. 4.2) and language workers worked with them in Alice Springs. It was through Bible translation work during the 1980s and 1990s that a number of adults, some of whom had had only rudimentary schooling, learned to read Ngaanyatjarra. Some in the diaspora like George, Clem and Patricia returned with literate behaviours and a fluency, automaticity, and broad lexical range in oral and written

⁶⁷⁹ (Douglas 1978: 118).

⁶⁸⁰ *Warburtonngamartatji Tjukurrpa*—Warburton News Vol.2 No.1 25/6/75.

⁶⁸¹ Original copies of the full 40 editions are held in the personal collection of Ameer Glass and Dorothy Hackett.

⁶⁸² (Gill Shaw pers. comm. 2005). Community newsletters have played an important role in the promotion of literacy, in both English and the local vernacular(s) in many Aboriginal communities across remote Australia, particularly during the era of bilingual education in SA, the NT and WA (Gale 1997; Goddard 1990; Hartman and Henderson 1994). Hilliard notes a newsletter at Ernabella as early as 1958 (Hilliard 1968: 161). Goddard discusses the significance of the Pitjantjatjara newsletters (Goddard 1990). The dismantling of bilingual education programmes also led to the closure of Literature Production Centres as sites for vernacular literacy production. Vernacular/English newsletters have included: *Tjakulpa Mulapa* from Areyonga NT and *Amataku Tjukurrpa* from Amata Community, SA, *Kurparu* from Ernabella, SA (Pitjantjatjara-English); *Mikurrunya* (Nyangumarta-English) from Strelley Community, WA; *Junga Yimi* (Warlpiri-English) from Yuendumu, NT. NPY Women's Council has also used print media to relay social, cultural, lifestyle information and council news in two glossy, colour newsletters; *Minymaku News* aimed at women across the NPY lands; and *Never Give Up News*, a youth-oriented format.

Fig. 4.1 Warburtongamartatji Tjukurpa – Warburton News

Warburtongamartatji Tjukurpa
Warburton News

Volume 4 No 7
Wednesday, November 21st, 1979

Hospitalgamartatjiluya watjara -
Tjitja Adeletu, Ruthtju, Gilbylu, Wati yirnalu puru Ruthtjuya mukurringkula goodbykarralkitjalu yamatji pirnila. Palunyaluya pirnipurkaku nintirringu. Puruyanyu pukuripa nyinarranytja ngurra ngaangka.

Mantingkaya pitjaku
Mr Neville Mellornya, Mr Douglasnga, puru walypala kutjupanya pitjakuya kutjupa Tjantingka. Nyangkaya pirninyartu pitja miitingiku Manti yunguntjarra. Nyangkalan pirninyartu wangkaku tjuuku. Kaltaya Mr Mellornya walypala pirninya marlaku yanku Cosmoku.

Jonathanngapula Kathynya
Kutjupa Mantingkalkipula Jonathantupula Kathylu Kununarranya wantirra wati-pitjangu. Palunyanyapula yurltutjarra pitjaarni. Nyinakupula Mr and Mrs Cotterillta palunyatjanu pitjaku Warburtonku.

Purnu payipungkula
Communitylulatju tjimarri pirningka payipungkulanytja purnu pirni yarnangungkatja. Purulatju nintilku manikitjalu Alice Springku puru Perthku. Purulan manikaralpi purnu pirninya payipungama yarnangungkatja. Mary Machalu yininti payipungku. Nyangka minyma pirniluya yininti pirninya murtu-murtulku. Mary Machalunyu purtu nyakupayi yinintiku.

Hospital staff say -
Sisters Adele, Ruth, Gilby, Wati yirna and Ruth would like to say goodbye to all the friends we have made at Warburton. We have learnt many things and are glad that we have lived in Central Reserve for a short while.

Coming on Monday
Mr Neville Mellor, Mr Douglas and another man will come here next Sunday. They want everyone to gather for a meeting on Monday morning. We will all talk about the store. Then Mr Mellor's group will go back to Cosmo.

Jonathan and Kathy Bates
Last Monday Jonathan and Kathy Bates left Kununarra. They are coming along by car. They will stay with Mr and Mrs Cotterill for a while then come here.

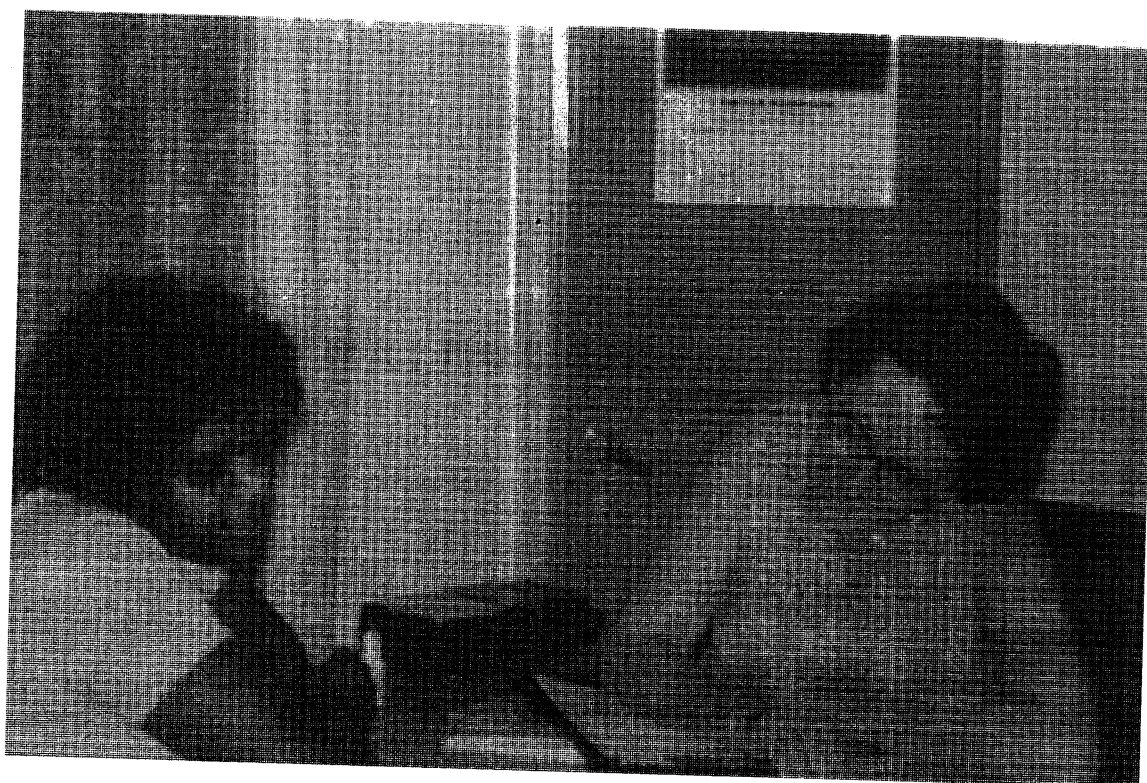
Buying artefacts
The community has been spending a lot of money buying artefacts from the people. We also need to sell these artefacts in Alice Springs and Perth so that we have enough money to continue buying artefacts. We especially need people at the artefact store to work dividing seed necklaces into shorter lengths and would appreciate any help as we have orders for these and Mary Macha has been waiting a long time for these.

Source: Warburtongamartatji Tjukurpa – Warburton News Vol. 4 No. 7 November 1979.

Fig. 4.2 Dorothy Hackett and Anee Glass doing Bible translation work with Ngaanyatjarra literates, 1982



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English. Contiguously, however, they also carried the *kurnta*—the ‘shame’ of no longer being fluent Ngaanyatjarra speakers.⁶⁸⁴ Nevertheless, by activating transfer literacy skills, Ngaanyatjarra literacy was gained and oral fluency returned. Workers were given additional daily literacy lessons and developed a particular kind of metalinguistic skill in the process of translating, checking and back translating.⁶⁸⁵ Patricia, for instance, participated in Bible translation and dictionary compilation work, and then went on to be a language worker in the school programme.⁶⁸⁶

Literacy as social practice

I now turn to the factors outside instructional settings that saw adults begin to use written language for their own social and cultural goals. After only two generations of schooling and exposure to Western literate practice some Ngaanyatjarra took hold of literacy to a certain extent for specific social, cultural (and as I show later political) purposes. Moreover, they began to exhibit ‘cultural ways of utilising written language’ and ‘literate behaviours’.⁶⁸⁷

Letter-writing

In the history of literacy in many societies letter-writing appears as a ‘pivotal genre’ that people readily ‘latch onto’.⁶⁸⁸ Letter-writing is considered the perfect genre for personal or political expression as ‘complete command of reading and writing skills is not necessary for the effective assertion of agency through literacy’.⁶⁸⁹

[R]eading and writing have regularly been mistaken as autonomous processes of pure form and meaning, separate from social circumstances, relationships and actions. Letters, compared to other genres, may appear humble, because they are so overtly tied to particular social relations of particular writers and readers, but that only means they reveal to us so clearly and explicitly the sociality that is part of all writing.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸³ Ngaanyatjarra Media, see: <http://www.waru.org/ngmedia/> See also (Michaels 1986; Hinkson 1999; Hinkson 2005) for discussions on Aboriginal media at Yuendumu, NT.

⁶⁸⁴ In Ngaanyatjarra *kurnta* is polysemous and means ‘shame’, ‘shyness’ and ‘respect’. *Kurnta* is characteristic of Aboriginal people throughout the Western Desert and manifests in a tendency to avoid focusing on the individual person and a reluctance to stand out or step forward in the company of strangers (Brooks 2002b).

⁶⁸⁵ See (Olson 1984; Yaden and Templeton 1986). According to Olson, metalinguistic thinking involves having the ‘metalanguage’ to objectify language as an ‘artifact’: that is to segment, isolate, label and describe language; to recognise patterns in written and spoken language and to recognise and analyse vowels, consonants, words, sentences and other parts of speech, see also (Heath 1986: 213).

⁶⁸⁶ After the bilingual programme ceased in 1980, a non-formal Ngaanyatjarra literacy programme—taught by Aboriginal Education Workers (AEW), later termed Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers (AIEO)—took place in a number of schools during the 1990s. In 1998 it came under the official Languages Other Than English (LOTE) programme of the WA Education Department (Glass 2000). Under the Ngaanyatjarra Education Area a draft Ngaanyatjarra Language and Culture curriculum was developed in 2002 by Ngaanyatjarra speakers with Lizzie Ellis and Inge Kral.

⁶⁸⁷ (Barton and Hamilton 2000: 8; Heath 1991).

⁶⁸⁸ (Besnier 1995: 16-17).

⁶⁸⁹ (Barton and Hall 2000: 9).

⁶⁹⁰ (Bazerman 2000: 27).

For these reasons letter-writing has been a focus of study in international research and in Aboriginal studies.⁶⁹¹ The ephemeral nature of letters means that examples of early letters are rarely preserved. In the Ngaanyatjarra context, the unique continuity of relationships between locals and staff has led to the preservation of letters revealing letter-writing as an incipient social literacy practice that went beyond the 'decontextualised school exercise'.⁶⁹² The practice of letter-writing was perhaps first modelled in the 'prayer letters'.⁶⁹³ Valcie recalls writing monthly 'prayer letters' at Mt Margaret in the 1940s by addressing 'about a thousand or more envelopes' to Prayer Partners:

[Children] had to do the envelopes and we daren't write it crooked on the envelopes, we had to go and do it. We had to do it straight and good handwriting. And they had taught us to write properly in school, and with Mrs Schenk.

Letter-writing was also a school activity at Warburton and an exercise for adolescents at the hostels (Fig. 4.3).⁶⁹⁴

Glass and Hackett's relationship with the Ngaanyatjarra extends back to 1963. Over the years they have received and kept copies of some 110 letters, as exemplified in Corpus A (Table 4.2). The letters fall broadly into two categories: 'letters of affect' and 'letters of advocacy'. The impetus for letters to emerge as a form of communication can be sourced to specific circumstances: the separation from family (as workers, students and during periods of incarceration), and the desire to move back to traditional homelands.

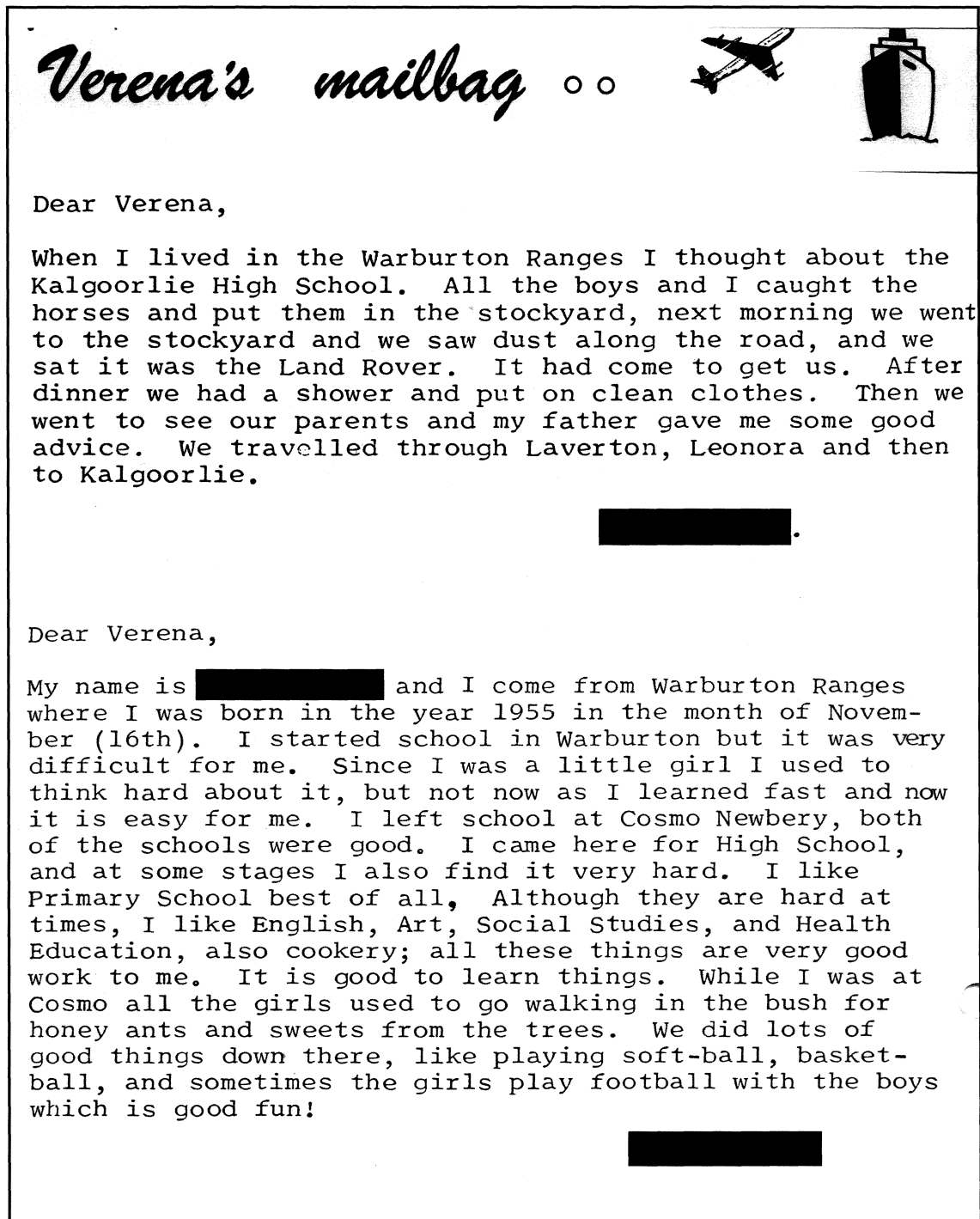
⁶⁹¹ See (Ahearn 2001b; Barton and Hall 2000; Besnier 1995; Kalman 1999). Australian Aboriginal examples include letter-writing at Killalpaninna Mission, SA (Austin 1986; Cane and Gunson 1986); Hermannsburg Mission, NT (Kral 2000); and colonial letter-writing in the south-east of Australia (Nelson et al. 2002; van Toorn 2006). Van Toorn suggests that personal letter-writing practices arose in response to the 'stolen generation' experience and many texts lie hidden in government archives. This warrants further research. Instances at Ernabella Mission have also been documented. Pitjantjatjara literacy tuition commenced at the mission at Ernabella Mission in 1940 and it was claimed that within a year children were writing as 'fluently' in Pitjantjatjara (Edwards 1969: 279). Evidence of this was a letter written by a twelve year old boy after only three months of vernacular literacy tuition (Gale 1997: 84-5). Hilliard notes early letter-writing practices between Pitjantjatjara correspondents as well as with Europeans. She describes letters written between family members away at other settlements, in hospital or on holiday in Adelaide (Hilliard 1968: 160-161). See also (Goddard 1990).

⁶⁹² (Barton and Hall 2000: 12). During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the DNW used newsletters to celebrate the achievements of integration. A special section was devoted to 'Verena's mailbag' where letters from children who boarded at Nindeebai, the DNW hostel in Kalgoorlie were published.

⁶⁹³ Prayer letters were used by the UAM missionaries to keep the churches and supporters informed of the missionaries' work, as the missions relied on donations (Milnes 1987: 164). Prayer letters, along with the *United Aborigines Messenger* facilitated this campaign. Donors also sent letters and birthday gifts to children in the Graham Home (Milnes 1987: 191).

⁶⁹⁴ As exemplified in 1966 in (Green 1983: 79-80).

Fig. 4.3 Letters from Warburton adolescents at Nindeebai Hostel, Kalgoorlie, 1970



Source: Department of Native Welfare Newsletter Vol. 1 No. 9, 1971.

Table 4.2 Letters—Corpus A

<i>Sender and/or location</i>	<i>Recipient and/or location</i>	<i>No. of letters</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Language</i>
Male prisoners	Glass and/or Hackett	7	1977–2003	English
Ngaanyatjarra people mostly when absent from home location	Glass and/or Hackett	18	1965–1989	English
Ngaanyatjarra people mostly when absent from home location	Glass and/or Hackett	28 (2 dictated)	1965–1990	Ngaanyatjarra
Young people away in hostels (Kurrawang, Fairhaven, Wongutha, GBTI)	Glass and/or Hackett	16	1965–1979	English
Young people away in hostels	Glass and/or Hackett	1	1970	Ngaanyatjarra
Ngaanyatjarra female who had moved elsewhere	Glass and/or Hackett	15	1966–1988	English
Husband	Wife	1	1977	Ngaanyatjarra (dictated)
Ngaanyatjarra male	Aboriginal friend	1	1980	Ngaanyatjarra (dictated)
<i>Family corpus:</i>				
Daughter at Hostel	Glass and/or Hackett	1	1960s	English
Father in Warburton	Glass and/or Hackett	3	1971–1973	Ngaanyatjarra (dictated)
Father in Warburton	Daughter at Hostel	4	1972–1974	Ngaanyatjarra (dictated)
Father	Official letters to Government/Advisor	4	1973–1976	Ngaanyatjarra & English (dictated)
<i>Official letters:</i> Ngaanyatjarra people	Government: AAPA, DAA, etc.	10	1973–1975	Ngaanyatjarra or Ngaanyatjarra /English (dictated)
	Community Advisor	1	1975	Ngaanyatjarra & English (dictated)
	Editor, West Australian	1	May 1975	Ngaanyatjarra & English (dictated)

Letters of affect

Traditionally, social interaction was within a small scale family group or band and kin-based relationships and relatedness to country was (and remains) of foremost importance.⁶⁹⁵ Myers describes how the ‘discourse of daily life’ for the Pintupi (and likewise the Ngaanyatjarra) is ‘heavily nuanced’ with emotion including compassion, melancholy, grief, happiness and shame, with compassion and shame ‘constraining’ the ways in which social action is organised.⁶⁹⁶

For the Ngaanyatjarra, being away from family or country for extended periods causes a deep emotional and physical yearning for people and place. This circumstance engenders an intense empathy for the emotional suffering of absent relatives and elicits the

⁶⁹⁵ (Brooks and Shaw 2003).

⁶⁹⁶ (Myers 1986: 103).

particularly Ngaanyatjarra emotion of *ngartu* ('compassion'). In Ngaanyatjarra figurative speech, body parts are a 'category of metaphor' used to evoke affective expressions and idioms.⁶⁹⁷ The 'seat of the emotions of grief, anger and desire' is located in the *tjuni* ('stomach') or *lirri* ('throat'):

lirri kampaku—feel very angry (lit. throat burn)

lirri talan-talan(pa)—angry (lit. throat hot)

lirri warurringku—become very angry (lit. throat become hot)

tjuni kaarr-kaarrarriku—become homesick (lit. stomach broken)

tjuni kartaly(pa)—bereaved, sad through losing a relative (lit. stomach broken)⁶⁹⁸

In addition, telaesthesia or predictive powers, experienced as *punka-punkara* ('a significant throbbing in the body') indicate that 'a relative is thinking of one'.⁶⁹⁹ For instance, in the traditional story *Tjuma marlu purlkanya*—The story of the giant kangaroo—the phrase '*kurta-pula kutjarra muhya takarlarrarnu*' literally means 'the two brothers' noses were making the cracking sound' indicating that something is wrong with a relative.⁷⁰⁰ This excerpt personifies the intense physicalisation of familial emotion in Ngaanyatjarra culture. Homesickness arising from lengthy absences was not an unknown emotion as marriage had separated kin and post-initiate young men travelled widely.

Here we see letter-writing emerging as a social practice to ameliorate feelings of *watjil-watjilpa* and *tjuni kaarr-kaarrarriku* ('loneliness' or 'homesickness'). This practice emerged out of altered conditions and at the intersection of events in time and place. For letter-writing to emerge as social practice requires not only individual technical literacy skill, but also the motivation and purpose, and the resources, the 'materiality', of letter-writing.⁷⁰¹ Prior to 1954 towns were prohibited areas and Aboriginal people were excluded from entering unless under an employment permit. Assistance from non-Aboriginal intermediaries like station managers or missionaries was probably required to purchase writing resources or to post letters. At Glenorn Station, Valcie recalls reading and writing letters: 'I just write to my friends and they send me a letter back'. Arthur tells of how he would get paper from the 'station man' when working on the station:

I used to have my case, comics, books something to make bigger things like learning. I still had my letters, you know writing letter all the time...Had pencil, writing pad, envelopes, stamp...and I have my mouth organ or anything like that, keep it in there, magazines, like comics.

He says he wrote letters to his sister at Warburton 'all the time' and she replied sometimes.

⁶⁹⁷ (Douglas 1979).

⁶⁹⁸ Sourced from (Glass and Hackett 2003).

⁶⁹⁹ (Douglas 2001 [1959]: 6).

⁷⁰⁰ (Glass and Newberry 1990 [1979]).

⁷⁰¹ (Hall 2000).

For others the separation from kin and country was institutionalised, coinciding with the moment in time when this generation had sufficient literacy and access to resources to enact the practice of letter-writing. Hostels, prisons and missions provide a fixed address and literate Europeans to mediate the process.

One of the boys from here, now a young man working at Esperance, recently wrote to Claude Cotterill telling of his love for the Lord and expecting to be accepted into Bible Institute this year and another had applied and he had 'proved himself trustworthy and a good worker'.⁷⁰²

Molly remembers writing letters at Cosmo: 'we knew how to read and write there, we used to write like a letter, letter to our boyfriends, that's all...in Kurrawang'. Una recalls that,

When I left school I used to write letters down to my uncle when I was down in Warburton here...he wrote letters back...because he'd been sent down to, what that place called? Pedlar's.

Others recall observing girls reading letters and writing letters in reply. Glass and Hackett recollect schoolgirls requesting writing materials to correspond with relatives in other places. Letters received by families were communal literacy events mediated either with literate adults, or by school children who would decode the text oblivious of the illocutionary force, the impact, that the content of the letter may have on individuals in the public audience.⁷⁰³ In speech act theory, illocutionary force is the effect that spoken or written text has on the listener or reader.⁷⁰⁴ Letters can have a meaning that goes beyond the content of the letter as the artifact can encode affect 'even when affect is not the primary focus' of the written text.⁷⁰⁵ Letters undoubtedly conveyed not only the literal reporting of news about family and friends, but also the illocutionary force, the emotional effect of homesickness for kin and country.

As an aside, a recurring theme among this cohort is that with few other distractions reading and letter-writing were used as leisure-time activities. On the weekends, while at Pedlar's, Jim 'read all the time, books, all kind of books...we write back home to family'. Similarly, when April was working at Leonora hospital:

I had nothing else to do so I used to lay down and read. We used to do a lot of readings, writing. I done a lot of writing...they used to write letters and I used to write back.

These practices required resources which were either bought or given. April says that she would get books from the Leonora bookshop (presumably the Gospel shop front mentioned earlier) and Jim mentions that 'sometime the farmer's wife give us book to read.'

⁷⁰² *United Aborigines Messenger*, June 1968: 13.

⁷⁰³ Marrkilyi E. pers. comm. May 2006.

⁷⁰⁴ (Austin 1962).

⁷⁰⁵ (Besnier 1993: 68).

Between 1965 and 1979 Glass and Hackett received 17 'letters of affect' (one in Ngaanyatjarra and the rest in English) from adolescents residing in the hostels (Table 4.2). The young writers request or send family news, report events, talk of their Christian faith and communicate homesickness. Initially, the government supplied only one free travel permit per year for each student, so mid-term holidays were spent at the hostels, thus exacerbating the sense of longing.⁷⁰⁶ *Phyllis* (Family D) wrote to Glass and Hackett from Fairhaven in 1972, and in 1973–1974 when she was at GBTI. Phyllis had learnt Ngaanyatjarra literacy as a teenager: 'we all living in *wiltjas* and we'd come over and learn to read—there were no DVDs or TVs or anything then'. Phyllis was at Fairhaven for two years and recalls wanting to be a missionary. She 'really wanted to be something' so went to GBTI—the only female from Warburton to do so. She also did a two week Bible translation course at the UAM Language Department. Glass and Hackett received other letters in English from students at GBTI who talk of 'praying for Warburton Ranges people to come to the Lord', 'training to preach in English and give out literature in jail', and wanting to 'help own people'.

Corpus A includes correspondence from one family; these eight letters include four from father to daughter when she was at Fairhaven. The summarised translated excerpts from the father's letters are overt in their expression of cultural meaning and values: affective appeals for compassion and obligation, pain at the separation from kin, the significance of birthplace, and the encoding of Christian practices:

July 1972

Are you well? I pray for you. Battery of company truck is flat. I have no money so you might send me some. Will you come in August? XXX has his daughter here and I want to have my daughter close. With all my heart I'm calling you back to your birthplace.

August 1972

Thanks for money. Are you still trusting in the Lord? The missionaries in Esperance have brought you up and we are only half your parents. XXX and his wife are truly parents to their child. My daughter is like an orphan. On Sunday we'll have a service at XX. God is Lord of all.

Although the father was unschooled, he was one of the few adults who went from being a complete non-literate to attaining some rudimentary vernacular literacy proficiency. He utilised the practice of letter-writing by dictating letters in Ngaanyatjarra which were transcribed and sometimes translated into English.⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰⁶ Glass and Hackett pers. comm. 2004.

⁷⁰⁷ Glass and Hackett—Interview 8/5/04.

'Letters of affect' also include letters to and from prisoners. Prisons are a context where the social value of text is enhanced and letters or cards represent the physical proof of connectedness to the outside world.⁷⁰⁸ From the 1960s, increasing numbers of desert people particularly men, were incarcerated for alcohol-related incidents. With imprisonment came a fixed address, access to the resources often not available on town reserves or in camps, and the support of literacy mediators. Howell recalls that 'letters in English were written to parents by young men in jail and these were often brought to us to be read and translated'.⁷⁰⁹ Una recalls a 'lot of letters' in the 1960s and 'no telephones'.⁷¹⁰ *Jacinta* (Family C) recalls that when her husband was incarcerated in the 1980s they would write to each other as letters were private and 'that time they don't have no phone'. Molly recently wrote letters to a relative in prison but 'lately he's ringing back'. To a certain extent phones have replaced 'letters of affect' and young women today spend days waiting by public phones for calls from their *kurri* ('spouse') in prison.

Glass and Hackett have continued corresponding in Ngaanyatjarra with literates since the 1960s as a way of encouraging vernacular reading, and the reading skills of some have improved.⁷¹¹ Una describes how she used letter-writing as a strategy to improve her reading and writing:

Sometimes I used to sit down and write letters, we used to buy pads, pens and pads. I used to sit down and write and I used to think: 'Oh what I got to put?' Then I used to sit down and write to friends, you know my friends, I'd send letters to my friends.

Personal letter-writing has existed as a significant, yet largely invisible *social* literacy practice. I now consider the literate strategies used in the assertion of self-determination when 'event-centred' correspondence was composed for an audience of *malikitja* ('strangers').⁷¹²

Letters of advocacy

'Letters of advocacy' emerge at the transection of socioeconomic factors where circumstances of the period generated a shift in communication conventions. Letters and petitions arose as a constructed response to serve in this case the ideological interests of the Ngaanyatjarra themselves.⁷¹³ The circumstances that led to these literacy events are now briefly discussed.

⁷⁰⁸ See (Wilson 2000a).

⁷⁰⁹ Howell—Email interview 2004.

⁷¹⁰ Telephones were introduced to Warburton and other communities after 1990 and this has contributed to the demise of letter-writing as a significant social practice, a factor also noted at Ernabella (Goddard 1990). Interestingly, the advent of phones has introduced a new literacy practice: written communication via fax.

⁷¹¹ Mountney—Interview 3/3/04.

⁷¹² (Besnier 1995).

⁷¹³ (Street 1984). Political letters have been studied in the literature (Stotsky 1987). Petitions have been utilised by other Aboriginal groups in Australia. Van Toorn makes reference to the use of petitions by Aboriginal people in the south-east

After the government took over, rundown mission infrastructure was replaced. A new 'hospital' was to be built on the *marlu tjina* sacred site on the kangaroo dreaming track, giving rise to a fear that the site would be damaged by trench digging. The resulting outrage from Ngaanyatjarra elders led to a so-called 'rampage of destruction' in Warburton in May 1975.⁷¹⁴ As a consequence, the construction company, Cooper and Oxley, departed and nurses were withdrawn. The event was reported in the *West Australian* as 'Mass Spearings Feared at Warburton'. In May 1975 two Warburton men responded by sending a Letter to the Editor with Hackett acting as scribe.⁷¹⁵ A paraphrased excerpt from the scribed letter follows:

May 1975

Not upset nor want to fight. Didn't chase Cooper and Oxley away with spears. Had meeting and asked them to leave. Older men complained about digging up the sacred site, so we sent them away. We won't start more trouble.⁷¹⁶

In addition, the principal and all but one teacher were transferred to other schools, with three Aboriginal teaching assistants and Wells continuing the bilingual programme. In response the community sent a petition to the Director of Primary Education in Western Australia (Fig. 4.4). The petition is authenticated by the distinctive cursive signature of most of the adult community members, notable if one recalls how recently English names had been acquired.

From a cultural perspective this event symbolises the erosion of the Ngaanyatjarra capacity to 'shape space'.⁷¹⁷ Prior to contact with the non-Aboriginal world senior Law men held unquestioned authority over the parameters of known space. As an awareness of a world beyond their own insinuated itself into the cultural consciousness, the power of older men began to diminish.⁷¹⁸

They'd find that building was going on but they were never asked whether that building should happen. In Warburton the kangaroo dreaming goes right through and on numerous occasions, almost every time some big infrastructure program has gone on people have got upset because they perceive that damage has been caused to that track. So lessons were never learnt...it's a bit of a sad

of Australia as early as 1846 when a petition was sent to Queen Victoria from Flinders Island (van Toorn 2006: 119–122) and in 1881 from Coranderrk Station (van Toorn 2006: 130–132). Other examples include: a petition from the Australian Aborigines League to King George V(I) in 1937 (Attwood 2003: 35–59) and the Gurindji petition to the Governor General Lord Casey in 1967 (Attwood 2003: 273–282). In 1963 the Yolngu people of Yirrkala famously sent a bark petition to the government protesting the violation of their rights and lack of consultation over the Nabalco bauxite mine at Gove. This made social and legal history and led to the first land rights case in an Australian court of law. The 1971 rejection of the Yirrkala claim to land was the impetus for the Yolngu to write a letter to the Prime Minister and the ultimate historic passing of the Australian *Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (Reid 1983: 1–2). In the 1970s the Yolngu also used letter-writing to stir responses from Aboriginal Councils and doctors to Aboriginal social and health issues (Reid 1983: 135–144).

⁷¹⁴ (Douglas 1978: 120–21). The event was termed a 'rampage of destruction' and reported in the *Sunday Independent*, June 8 1975 (Douglas 1978).

⁷¹⁵ Hackett pers. comm. 2005.

⁷¹⁶ Letters from the personal collection of Glass and Hackett.

⁷¹⁷ (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]).

⁷¹⁸ Brooks pers. comm. 2006.

Fig. 4.4 Petition from Warburton Community to Director of Primary Education Perth, 1975

To: Mr SK Palmer
 Director of Primary Education, Parliament Place
 WEST PERTH

We the undersigned, being parents of children attending the Warburton Ranges School, wish to bring to your attention the fact that we have eighty children attending the School and only one European teacher. We therefore ask that you send another European teacher as quickly as possible.

Mr JACK Lane Mrs Jean Lane MUMMAINEWELL STANLEY - WEST LALLA Hazel Frazer Betty West Phillip West Peter Holland Carol Holland David Davides Gregory Fox Lily Simms Johnson Lane Mrs Wafda Lane John Richard Len McArthur Paddy Lane Wanajira Lane Freda Lena REIT ROBERTSON	Thelma Frank Andrew Lawson Myra Lawson Gilbert Gersoning Darnley Gersoning Charlie Munro Eric's Munro Lena Mitchell Steve Mitchell Mr Tommy Robinson Violet Robinson Derek Mitchell Jennifer Mitchell Vera Woods Brian Woods Harold Robertson Ken Lawson PUAL SIMMS HARRY SIMMS
---	--

I certify that the above signatures are true and correct in every respect
 T. SIMMS.....
 T. SIMMS - CHAIRMAN, WARBURTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Source: Ngaanyatjarra Council Native Title Unit archive.

tale at Warburton in terms of Aboriginal control. That's something that's been there since the outset and its never got any better. It's got worse in the sense that the ratio of staff is greater and so many staff coming who people don't know about and they suddenly find that it has mushroomed, all these other people here doing jobs.⁷¹⁹

During the 'mission time', despite contestation over sacred sites, the Ngaanyatjarra had retained some spatial control, but as Warburton was transformed from 'an Aboriginal place' into a white town the power balance shifted. Community is thus a site of contested meaning; a physical entity and a 'symbolic construction' within a mythological space redolent with imagery.⁷²⁰

Another context that produced letters of advocacy was the outstation movement which was propelled by the strongly held desire to return to traditional country and the Ngaanyatjarra took advantage of the resources offered by the Whitlam government. Letters dictated in Ngaanyatjarra by senior leaders to Glass or Hackett were written to officials in DAA and AAPA requesting assistance to return to country (Table 4.2).⁷²¹ The English translation plus the Ngaanyatjarra transcription were sent. Glass recalls one old man wanting her to write a letter to an official but he had no idea about 'what writing letters was about or what he should put' and said 'just tell him my name'. Letters were generally requests for trucks, landrovers, bores or money, but the discourse conveys the depth of feeling for, and relatedness to, country, as the following translated excerpts suggest:

November 1973

...We are asking to stay in our own country...

July 1974

...I want a bore at Jameson my own country. Have become an old man at Warburton...

September 1974

...Please come to see my home at Patjarr. Bring lots of landrovers...

May 1975

...This story is about my country. Aborigines and white men have been getting stone from my country. A bore needs to be put down...

Once Community Advisors were appointed to the new outstations, letters were sent exhorting them to 'come quickly'.

⁷¹⁹ Brooks—Interview 15/8/04.

⁷²⁰ (Cohen 1985).

⁷²¹ Letters were addressed personally to Senator Jim Cavanagh (the Whitlam government's second Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs from 1973-1975); F.E. Gare moved from DNW to AAPA in WA and Jeremy Long (who had previously been a patrol officer) worked with DAA. The Ngaanyatjarra communities, although in WA, were serviced by the Commonwealth DAA office in Alice Springs until 1987 when Kalgoorlie DAA took over the central desert region (Fletcher 1992).

In one instance, Harold and two other men dictated a letter advocating the need for funds to help build a direct road to Giles.⁷²² The building of this road, by digging a cut-line following the traditional line of rockholes, resonates in the collective memory (see Family E), as people recall making the road without whitefella assistance with the process documented in the *Warburton News*. Significantly, the letters were instrumental in achieving results, as indicated by the existence of the requested roads and communities today. They convey a strategic awareness by senior *yarnangu* of the significance of the written word and a familiarity with literate modes.

The orality of written texts

Aspects of orality can be found in the incipient literacy practices of the Ngaanyatjarra especially, letter-writing. Letters ‘written in the style of speaking’ have been elemental in the emerging genres of writing in the Western world.⁷²³ Older people utilised letter-writing as a collective social practice and most were unable to write independently. A mediator would write the dictated words, capturing the nuances of spoken text, and then add salutations and other features of the written genre. Consequently, distinctive features of Ngaanyatjarra speech style and register are evident in the written register, as is the encoding of cultural meaning. It can be posited that the letters came to embody a form of ‘phatic communion’ that could ‘straddle the boundary between orality and literacy’.⁷²⁴

Oral speech styles and register

In the past, Ngaanyatjarra people employed more complex and subtle speech styles and registers than are utilised today.⁷²⁵ People use the term *tjaa yuti* (*tjaa yartaka* or *wangka yuti*) literally meaning ‘clear speech’ to refer to their richly nuanced language. The verbal arts are central to Ngaanyatjarra social interaction; ‘whether conversational, controversial, descriptive, hortatory, dramatic or entertaining’ Ngaanyatjarra ‘is enriched with all the devices of rhetorical art...metaphor and simile, epigram and pun, metonymy and synecdoche, irony and sarcasm, exclamation and rhetorical question, hyperbole and hypobole, euphemism and circumlocution, alliteration and onomatopoeia’.⁷²⁶ Ngaanyatjarra

⁷²² This road forms part of the main arterial from Laverton to Ayers Rock known as the Great Central Road.

⁷²³ (Bazerman 2000: 18). Writers on the history of literacy development (Clanchy 1979; Graff 1987) highlight the role of the scribe in mediating communal literacy events. In his work on nineteenth century English pauper letters, Fairman makes the distinction between ‘schooled’ written English and other non-standard varieties that more closely resemble spoken English. He describes people at the more spoken end of the literate continuum as ‘orate’ rather than ‘illiterate’ in order to focus on what they ‘could do’ rather than what they ‘could not do’ (Fairman 2000: 81). Also see (Baynham 1993; Kell 2000) and in *Aboriginal Australia* (van Toorn 2006; Kral and Falk 2004).

⁷²⁴ (Malinowski 1994 [1923]: 10; Besnier 1995: 18).

⁷²⁵ The range of speech styles used in social interaction in Aboriginal languages have been documented by linguists (Haviland 1979; Heath et al. 1982; Dixon 1990). See also (Goddard 1983; Goddard 1992) for a description of speech styles in Yankunytjatjara, a closely related Western Desert dialect.

⁷²⁶ (Douglas 1979: 49)

speech styles include baby talk, a special ceremonial language, and a form of public rhetoric.⁷²⁷

In earlier times across the Western Desert a form of public oratory or ‘rhetoric’ known as *yaarlpirri* or early morning talk was used extensively to discuss issues, air grievances, disseminate information or organise the day’s hunting and gathering.⁷²⁸ According to Liberman, *yaarlpirri* is a more formal version of ordinary discourse, an interactional system where comments are addressed to all persons present, the content is objectified and ‘the public nature of the discourse minimises personal interests’:

[G]enerally these ‘announcements’ are made by non-sequential ‘turns’ and the speaking will move about the camps until quite a few of the fires have had their full say. However, it is not always a personal say which is offered; more frequently it is a sort of public statement rendered as the comments of a community person. Topics become developed and clarified over a number of such ‘public announcements,’ as each contributor builds upon the formulations which have come before, often repeating what has already been said. The themes are formulated and received as publicly available discourse, which continues as the eastern horizon grows brighter with the dawn.⁷²⁹

Yaarlpirri is enacted to publicly admonish or ‘tell off’ individuals for minor misdemeanours. *Yaarlpirri*, although rarely heard in Warburton, is still utilised in other locations. It is conjectured that people’s capacities to utilise traditional speech styles in the maintenance of traditional authority has diminished, as Molly reflects:

Used to be way back, they talk about the things they got to do... They just sit down like in different camps and they get up and talk *yaarlpirri* and the next person gets up and talks. Sometimes they tell you off for taking off with that boy, how to get a boy or girl right skin way... That’s how it happened in our families. Nowadays most of them it goes over their head, not our days. Now they don’t listen. Now a lot of people close family they living together third cousins, fourth cousins. In old days, you do anything wrong spear in your leg, woman and man, and hit on the head. Not now, policeman around, domestic violence they say. No more tribal punishment. Government put the law out. Now they let them have their own way. Now if you talk *yaarlpirri* in Warburton they go and get the police ‘cause you’re not allowed to say that. That’s the white people interfering, they’re making the Law different.⁷³⁰

In Ngaanyatjarra, as in other Western Desert dialects, relationships and social context determine the nature of social interaction. These pragmatic elements determine the choice

⁷²⁷ *Tjaa nyantulypa* is a special speech style used during the ‘special boy’ ceremonies when addressing certain relatives (Douglas 1976: 56). As a speech style it is distinct from standard Ngaanyatjarra and used by the *yirrkapirri*—the grandfather, grandmother, aunt, uncle, mother and father of the ‘special boy’ who accompanies the annual *tjilkeatja* journey (Peterson 2000). Also termed *wangka nyantulypa* or *tjamayitjunku* where *tjamayitjunku* means to talk a different (special) language (Glass and Hackett 2003: 419). Described by Goddard as *anitji* or *tjaa paku* in Yankunytjajara, an auxiliary language comprising separate lexical items, but identical grammar except for special pronouns, demonstratives and interrogatives (Goddard 1983: 325–330). Only some families continue to use this speech style.

⁷²⁸ (Goddard 1983: 319–322).

⁷²⁹ (Liberman 1985: 4). Rose also suggests that with the advent of two-way radio in the Western Desert in the 1970s features of *yaarlpirri* were ‘readily adapted to this form of non-visual communication between multiple interactants’ (Rose 2001: 62).

⁷³⁰ Data from (Kral and Ward 2000).

of register and style, and the paralinguistic and prosodic aspects of speech.⁷³¹ In addition, ‘interpersonal grammatical resources function in exchanges between speakers to negotiate the tenor of their relationships, most generally in terms of status, social proximity and affect’.⁷³² Paralinguistic or nonverbal codes such as gesture, gaze and hand signs, *yurriira watjara* (‘speaking by moving’) are integral to everyday discourse and are also employed in avoidance relationships and sorry camp interactions.⁷³³ The choice of register is determined by the relationship between interlocutors. A respectful or polite relationship is expected between certain relatives, that is, with one’s: *ngunytju* (mother/mother’s sisters), *mama* (father/father’s brothers), *kurta* (older brother/male cousins), *tjurtu* (older sister/female cousins), *marlanypa* (younger brother/sister/cousins), *yurmtalpa* (daughter/niece), *katja* (son/nephew) or *watjirra* (‘cousin/cross-cousin – i.e. son or daughter of father’s sister or mother’s brother’). A joking relationship exists with one’s *kamuru* (mother’s brother), *kurntili* (father’s sister), *tjamu* (grandfather/grandson), *kaparli* (grandmother/granddaughter) and long way cousins. An avoidance relationship is required with one’s *yumari* (son-in-law/mother-in-law) and *waputju* (man’s father-in-law or potential father-in-law/son-in-law or potential son-in-law) and in certain ceremonial contexts.

Social relationships and context determine speech styles. Direct speech—*tjukarurru watjalku* (‘talking directly’) or *tjukarurrura kulilku* (‘understanding something straight’)—is employed in situations requiring ‘straight talking’. People frequently refer to ‘straight talking’ with an expectation that the talk will result in promises that will not be broken. Indirect speech—*tjitirrpapa watjalku* or *kiti-kiti watjalku*—employs subtle, highly metaphorical features and is used to deal with conflict in public, or when individuals who stand in a constrained relationship need to communicate with one another, they do so indirectly—using *tjarlpa watjalku*.⁷³⁴ In this context advice is given in a polite manner and the speech event incorporates morphological and lexical features such as: the politeness suffix *-munta*, the particle *tjinguru* (‘maybe’ or ‘perhaps’)—expressing uncertainty or even possibility, and the future tense form of the verb (e.g. *kulilku*), rather the command form (e.g. *kulila*).

⁷³¹ Distinct changes in the mode of voice production are common in Ngaanyatjarra. These include talking or singing on the ‘indrawn breath’ or lengthening the sound before drawing breath and using a ‘creaky voice’ when telling stories or reporting events. Similar features are noted by (Laughren 1984: 87; Walsh 2006) in other regions.

⁷³² (Rose 2001: 15).

⁷³³ Traditional auxiliary sign languages or gestural systems are found across Aboriginal Australia (Kendon 1988).

⁷³⁴ Rose suggests that the equivalent term *tjalpawangkantja* in Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara, refers to speaking obliquely and is ‘constrained by rules of appropriate interaction’. It is ‘mainly spoken between affinal relations, particularly distant brother’s-in-law who have exchanged actual or betrothed spouses’ where the function is ‘to avoid any implication of status difference between speakers’ and to ‘avoid conflict’ and ‘express solidarity’ (Rose 2001: 62).

Speech styles in the written register

In Fig. 4.5a I show a transcription of a letter dictated in Ngaanyatjarra and translated into English (Fig. 4.5b) and sent to Senator Cavanagh in 1973 requesting services for an outstation at Blackstone. It represents a new type of communication event; the text is written rather than oral *and* the recipient is unknown. In this instance, the relationship between interlocutors elicits the indirect register indicating the respectful distance and politeness required of utterances with persons where social distance is required. The politeness markers—the future tense verb ending *-ku*, the politeness suffix *-munta* and the particle *tjinguru* ('maybe or perhaps')—are indicated near the beginning of the written discourse:

Wanytjawara-munta tjunku ngurra?

When will you put homes?

Kalatju purtulatju tjapilku tjinguru.

Perhaps we will ask in vain.

Features found in *jaarpirri* are also evident; for example, recapitulation or 'serial development of topic', and the use of utterances which have 'the character of formal announcements'.⁷³⁵ Revealed also is the 'encoding' of cultural meaning in the written register; the connection to country, the expression of *ngarltu* ('compassion') and an emphasis on *miranykanyilku* ('looking after' people).

A second corpus of letters (Table 4.3) written by *David* (Family J) also exemplifies texts written 'in the style of speaking'.⁷³⁶ David weaves cultural meanings and orality into a writing style that is not separated from social circumstance as an 'autonomous process', but overtly tied to social relations.⁷³⁷ His repertoire is inclusive of features that mirror Ngaanyatjarra speech styles and genres, for example the hortatory mode (see Fig. 4.6).⁷³⁸

Significantly, David reads mainly Ngaanyatjarra and only a little English. He had minimal schooling: 'never went right through in the school...never did get *ninti purlka* ('really knowledgeable') at the mission, not really, not me, left school at Grade 3'. His competence derives from learning to read Ngaanyatjarra as an adult and working with Glass, Hackett and Howell. David was one of the three men at the SIL 'Creative Writers Workshop' in 1974, mentioned earlier. He has since authored traditional stories, contributed to Bible translation work, assisted in dictionary compilation and taught Ngaanyatjarra language to

⁷³⁵ (Lieberman 1985: 102).

⁷³⁶ Many of these texts remain in the personal collections of Herbert Howell, Charlie Staples and Albie Viegas who mediated the writing process.

⁷³⁷ (Bazerman 2000).

new staff.⁷³⁹ In addition to the texts described here, David has written a collection of unpublished traditional stories.

Table 4.3 Letters—Corpus B

<i>Sender</i>	<i>Audience</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Content</i>
David in Darwin, 1974	Ameec Glass	1	Corpus A	Personal news
David in Warburton, 1975	Senator Cavanagh	1	Corpus A	Request for bore, truck and money for outstation
David	Pitjantjatjara Council	1	DL1	Claim for money re. deceased relative
David	Ngaanyatjarra Community	1	DL2	Narrative history of Ngaanyatjarra Council
David	Community Advisor	1	DL3	Concern for petrol sniffers
David	ATSIC and Community Advisor		DL4	Letter inc. work history and request for vehicle to do work
David's wife	Community Advisor	1	DL5a	Work history and request for loan
David	Community Advisor	1	DL5b	Support for wife's request and own request for work
David	Community Advisor	1	DL6	Request for vehicle to do work
David	Editor, Ngaanyatjarra News	1	DL7	Open letter inc. work history and request for vehicle to do work
David	Notice to all staff, Warburton	1	DL8	Plea for respectful road use during Law Business
David	Lawyer	1	DL9	Compassion re. son's circumstances in prison
David	Lawyer	1	DL10	Compassion re. son's arrest
David	Police statement	1	DL11	Written statement re. events around card game
David	Police	1	DL12	Request for return of gun and licence
David	Fax to family	1	DL13	Condolences and apology for not attending funeral
David	General audience	3	DN1-3	Narrative histories inc. requests for vehicles/money

David's role, identity and status in this speech community are inextricably linked to literacy. He has the authority to communicate events and concerns using written, rather than oral, strategies and in this diglossic context his choice of Ngaanyatjarra or English is determined by the audience.⁷⁴⁰ David commonly writes, or dictates, a Ngaanyatjarra text, then the written text is translated into English with a scribe. In the case of official letters, he dictates an English version and seeks assistance to improve the syntax.⁷⁴¹ David reflects on his overtly literate practice: 'I'm the only one who does that. I think about what I want to say and I can explain it better writing than saying those words'.

⁷³⁸ (Glass 1980: 79-95). At a general level of textual organisation and/or function, speech genres can be classified at a universal level using terms like 'narrative', 'hortatory', 'expository' and 'procedural'. The repertoire of genres particular to any speech community alters, however, according to sociocultural context (Goddard 1990: 46).

⁷³⁹ (Glass and Newberry 1990 [1979]).

⁷⁴⁰ (Ferguson 1959).

⁷⁴¹ Staples pers. comm. 2004.

Fig. 4.5a Letter to Senator Cavanagh, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, concerning Blackstone outstation, 1973 (Ngaanyatjarra)

Warburton Ranges,
P.M.B. Kalgeorlie 6431
November 19th 1973

Senator Cavanagh,
Dept of Aboriginal Affairs,
P.O. Box 241,
Civic Square A.C.T. 2608

Blackstonekurna wangkakitja. Wanytjawara-munta tjunku ngurra. Palunyatjanu tawunpa tjunku wati mapitjatjakuya Pensioners pirninya nyinatjaku tawunta Blackstoneta?

Kalatju kuwarripa waitumara puurumaratjaku kapi nganalu Georgetju. Tjinguru before Christmas puurumalku Georgeulu Warburtona ngarnmanytju wiyaralpi.

Kalatju purtulatju tjapilku tjinguru. Palunyatjanu ngurrangkalatju nyinakitja mukurringkula. Watjala warrpungkulalpi wiyala Canberralanguru tjinguru tawunpa. Tjingurutju kapamantu helpumaruna ngankuku Landrover nintilku ngurrangka nyinatjaku. Puukulatju nyakula. Puurumalku nyangka puungkalatju nyinaku ngarnmanytju Blackstoneta. Jackie Forbes, Fred Forbes, Jimmy Benson, Yiwinti Smith, Dinny Smith, Norman Lyons, Barry Ill, Mr Duncan. Palunyanyaya Blackstonetat nyinapayi.

Caravanpa tjinguru wiyalku medicinetjarra tjilku pirniku after Christmas Blackstoneku. Tjitji pirniku Blackstoneku caravanpa ngarnmanytju wiyalku mirrka mitjitjiku caravanpa tjunkunyangka sister nyinatjaku storestjarra nyinatjaku mirrkatarra nyinatjaku. Kayi miranykanyinma pikarringkunyangka tjilturrunama. Palunyangka tjitji pikarringkunyangka.

Mukurringanyilatju mutuka purikanya wiyaltjaku pensioner pirniku mirrka katitjaku Warburtonanguru Partininytjarraku. Kan caravanpa ngalyawiyalku sisterkamu tjitji miranykanyiltjaku Blackstonetanguru.

Mr Cavanaghlakutulatju wiyarnu nyuntulun nyakutjaku Blackstone nga nyakutjaku nyuntulun Canberralanguru nyakulan w watjaltjaku.

Mukurringanyilatju Blackstoneta nyinakitja ngurra yungarrangkalatju. Christmaspalatju nyinarra kuwarripa nyakula ngalkulalatju Blackstoneku mapitjakitja.

Ngarnmanytju caravanpa wiyalku sister kutjarra wiyalku Blackstoneku nyinatjaku miranykanyiltjaku sister kutjarra puru mirrka storestjarra nyinatjaku tjarntutjarra matron kutjarraku pulampa weekendpa nyinatjaku tirtu.

Ngarnmanytju caravanpa ngalyawiyalku sister kutjarra mirrkamarntu stores sister kutjarraku nyinatjaku, medicinepa pikatjarra pirniku nintiltjaku blackstoneta nyinarranytjalu. Ka sister kutjarralu Blackstoneta nyinarranytjalu Warburten ka telephone ngalyawiyanna councilku ka kukurrahku mantjira katiku hospitalku Warburton Rangeku. Nyangka walykumumarringkunyangka marlakulu makatiku Blackstoneku. Tjitji tjinguru pikarriku mama ngunytjurtarra katiku hospitalku Warburtona kanyilku makatiku Blackstoneku.

Sister kutjarralu ngula palya nyinaku Blackstoneta medicinepa nintilku kanyilku miranykanyinma.

Manyawa sister kutjarra mantjiralpi ngalyawiyala Blackstoneku, Blackstoneta miranykanyiltjaku medicinepa nintiltjaku tjitji pirniku wati pirniku Blackstoneta nyinarranytjalu, Blackstoneta nyinatjaku caravantjarra nyinatjaku miranykahyiltjaku.

ready tawunpa wiyalkitjalu sister kutjarra ngarnmanypa ngalyawiyala caravantjarra medicinetjarra pitjala nyinatjaku Blackstone ta.

Fig. 4.5b Letter to Senator Cavanagh, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, concerning Blackstone outstation, 1973 (English)

Warburton Ranges,
P.M.B. Kalgoorlie 6431
November 19th 1973

Senator Cavanagh
Dept of Aboriginal Affairs,
P.O. Box 244,
Civic Square A.C.T. 2608

Dear Sir,

I want to talk about Blackstone. When will you put houses and make it a place for all the pensioners to stay at the Settlement of Blackstone?

We are waiting for George Bialobrodsky to put a bore down there. Perhaps George will be able to do that before Christmas after he has finished around Warburton.

Perhaps we will ask in vain. We are wanting to stay in our own country. You say the word and quickly send a house from Canberra maybe. Perhaps the Government will help me and give me a Landrover so that we can stay in our own country. We are waiting for a bore. When a bore is put down we will go and live at Blackstone. Jackie Forbes, Fred Forbes, Jimmy Benson, Yiwinti Smith, Dinny Smith, Norman Lyons, Barry Bill and Mr Duncan. These are the ones who always stayed at Blackstone.

Perhaps after Christmas you will send a caravan with medicine to Blackstone for the children. For the children first of all send a caravan and food for white women so that a sister can stay there with her own food. And she will look after the children and give them needles when they become sick.

We would like you to send a big truck to take the pensioners' food from Warburton to Blackstone. And to send a caravan and a sister to look after the children at Blackstone.

We have sent this to Mr Caranagh so that you can see about Blackstone from Canberra. And so that you seeing from Canberra can say.

We want to live at Blackstone in our own country. After we have stayed here for a while and eaten Christmas we would like to go to Blackstone.

First perhaps you will send a caravan and two sisters to Blackstone to look after the children. Two sisters and their own stores so that they can stay there all the time even over the weekend.

First of all send a caravan and two sisters with food so that they can stay there and give medicine to any sick people while they are at Blackstone. And the two sisters at Blackstone can send a radio message to Warburton to the Council and they will come and get the sick person and take them to hospital at Warburton. And when they are better take them back to Blackstone. When a child becomes sick perhaps the mother and father also can be brought to Warburton to be near the children and then taken back to Blackstone.

It would be good for two sisters to live at Blackstone and give medicine and look after the sick.

Look for two sisters and when you can get them, send them to Blackstone to give medicine to the children and men at Blackstone, to live at Blackstone in a caravan and look after the sick.

When you are ready to send a house, send two sisters first with a caravan and medicine to live at Blackstone.

Yours sincerely

Dinny Smith.

Fig. 4.6. Hortatory text 1990s

Mr [REDACTED]'s story.

Long time ago when there was no Pitjantjatjarra and Ngaanyatjarra Council we always face up to the DAA every meeting time so we always bring our meeting each from the other community. So we heard all them Pitjantjatjarra people formed their own council so we heard when they formed their own Pitjantjatjarra council every meeting time we went to their meeting over there to bring it up at the meeting. So they always listen to us to help us too. And when we heard all those things so we formed our own Ngaanyatjarra Council ourself. So we always have a meeting. Those Pitjantjatjarra people they were high up and we were down low. Bit by bit, every meeting time we always get together, man and women from every community get together for this Ngaanyatjarra meeting. So we always talk about the things we want to get to make this Ngaanyatjarra big. So when we have the Ngaanyatjarra meeting everybody talks up and if they want anything on this Ngaanyatjarra Lands. The first plan we bought one little Cessna plane. From there, every meeting time we talk about other things too. We bought more planes, trucks, warehouse in Perth, all that. So this Ngaanyatjarra went big. Now today I'm looking at not enough people man and woman not coming in to this meeting to talk in the Ngaanyatjarra meeting. Look like only council talking at the meeting. Only some from the communities come, should be lots and lots of people coming from all the communities from all over from Ngaanyatjarra. Maybe people should talk at the community meeting and tell everyone, man and woman, to go to the Ngaanyatjarra meeting every time. This is the important Ngaanyatjarra meeting. We don't want to go down to be weak how this area was before. So this is what I'm saying now, because of the people not coming in to the meeting.

Source: Charlie Staples.

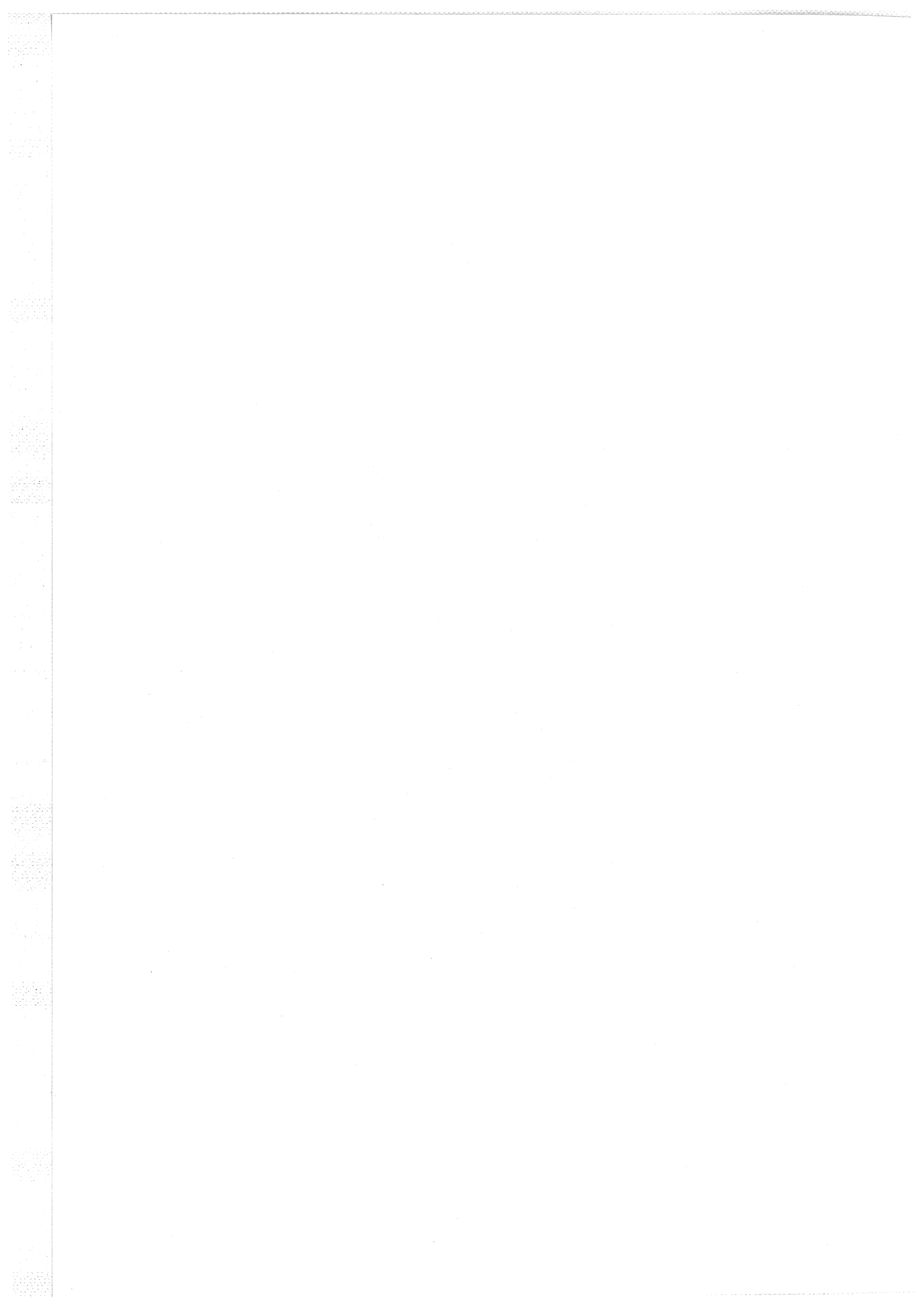


Fig. 4.7 Notice to all staff 2002

NOTICE TO ALL STAFF

This letter is to welcome all staff, who are coming to live and work in Warburton Community.

Warburton Community is a community of Ngaanyatjarra speaking Aboriginal people. We still follow the traditional law and culture of our people.

Sometimes you will see things to do with Ngaanyatjarra culture that are different to what you are used to. This is a time when all yarnangu have to think and be careful about where they go and what they say. They also have to be careful not to stare at things they are not used to been [sic] close to before.

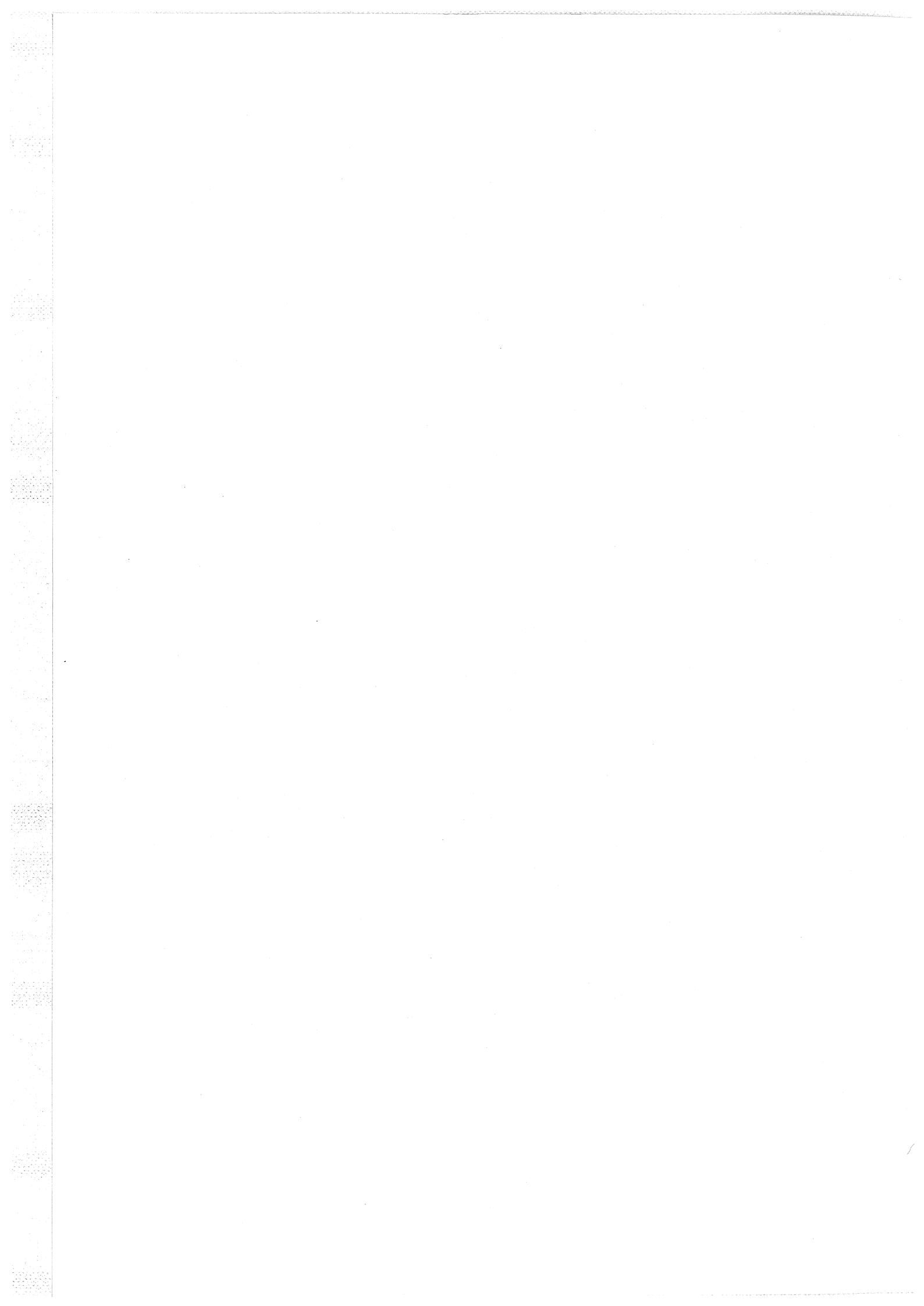
This is the same for staff working in the communities. Be patient and sensible. Don't ask. People will tell you things you need to know.

The roads shouldn't be used at all when Aboriginal culture (LAW) is on.

This means no white staff such as the clinic Toyota or trucks carting sand etc.

When the road is blocked this means the road is blocked for everyone including black and white staff.

By Mr [REDACTED]



International research exploring the links between oral traditions and ‘story schema’ has shown the culturally-bound nature of oral narrative structures and how this influences writing style.⁷⁴² It has been suggested that the ‘narrative structure that is valued in each community gives form to the way that people express ideas in conversation and writing’.⁷⁴³ In the Western Desert, regenerative re-enactments of the *tjukurrpa* through ritual and ceremony are critical to the wellbeing of people. Sacred texts and performances ‘encode the system of land ownership and resource exchange’, thus ‘encrypting’ information that is ‘indispensable to the social and material wellbeing of the culture over great distances and deep time’.⁷⁴⁴ Sociocultural systems ‘are manifested and reproduced through time as social situations, that are themselves realised as texts of various types, including verbal exchanges, instructions, narratives, songs, rituals, paintings’ and ‘prescribed material activities’.⁷⁴⁵ A complex web of cultural meaning is embedded in these ‘rich semiotic resources’ (i.e. the grammar, discourse patterns and prosodic characteristics of oral texts). Narratives from the *tjukurrpa* have varying discursive strengths and restrictions depending on the secular or sacred nature of context and audience. Narrative discourse structures play ‘a central role’ in how human beings the world over have ‘made sense of the world’.⁷⁴⁶ In the Aboriginal world language forms the nexus between social identity and land and the *marlu tjina* ‘incident’ illustrates the potency of the interrelationship between *tjukurrpa*, land, and wellbeing in the social construction of reality that ‘makes sense’ in the Ngaanyatjarra world.⁷⁴⁷

Through analysing the early written texts in the Ngaanyatjarra canon the influence of the oral tradition is palpable.⁷⁴⁸ It is possible to observe conceptual and linguistic transformations as translations take on formulaic English story-telling conventions. Early texts written in the style of speaking commonly use the expression *kutjulpirtulpi* (‘in early days’ time—from the adverb *kutjulpirtu* meaning ‘previously’).⁷⁴⁹ However in ‘the story of the two brothers’—*tjuma kurtarra-pula*—the opening phrase ‘*kutjulpirtulpinyu kurtarra-pula*

⁷⁴² (Bamony 2002; Bauman 1986; Brewer 1985; Kintsch and Greene 1978; Minami and McCabe 1996; Scollon and Scollon 1981).

⁷⁴³ (Rogoff 2003: 269).

⁷⁴⁴ (Rose 2001: 29).

⁷⁴⁵ (Rose 2001: 49).

⁷⁴⁶ (Klapproth 2004: 7).

⁷⁴⁷ See (Merlan 1981).

⁷⁴⁸ In a paper presented at an Australian languages workshop in 2006 linguist Michael Walsh outlines structural, lexical, grammatical and prosodic features of narrative style in Aboriginal Australia and how they differ from Anglo-Western narratives. These include: more common exophoric reference and intertextuality; repetition of events; intentional vagueness; resolution non-existent or delayed; cataphoric reference more typical than anaphoric; contrasting story schemata; co-construction with hearer; explicit anchoring of location/direction and drawn out articulation of key words (Walsh 2006).

⁷⁴⁹ (Murray 1979 [1969]-b).

nyinarranytja is translated as ‘once upon a time there lived two brothers’.⁷⁵⁰ Older people commonly recount events of the recent past using experiential or qualitative time expressions, for example ‘mission time’, ‘station time’, ‘testing time’, ‘government time’, or ‘DAA time’. Opening phrases in David’s early texts exemplify this: ‘Long time ago, in the mission time’ or ‘Long time ago when there was no Pitjantjatjarra [sic] and Ngaanyatjarra Council’ (Fig. 4.6). The use of written markers of fixed Western chronological or calendrical time (e.g. date or time markers) is common practice, although one can speculate that dating documents remained a mimetic form of the practice for some time.⁷⁵¹

David’s written texts display features of Ngaanyatjarra narrative style. In a series of letters—dictated in English and scribed by non-Aboriginal friend—David employs circumlocution to indirectly embed requests for work, money or cars within an oral ‘travelling narrative’ schemata—a ‘story schema’ from the traditional oral canon that predictably uses the ‘journey’ as a structuring principle in narratives.⁷⁵² Glass suggests that ‘journey’ schemas in Ngaanyatjarra are typically organised around a ‘departure phase’, a ‘transit phase’, and an ‘arrival phase’, with each phase encoded and elaborated in predictable patterns of grammatical and lexical cohesion.⁷⁵³ David exploits the distance and indirectness of written language in a sequence of letters that travel through these phases, often recounting scenes from his working life, before arriving at his climax: the indirect request. Elements redolent of *yaarlpirri* are evident in the texts where the topic is developed often by building upon what has come before, or repeating what has already been said:

This is what I’m writing about. To let you know that if you are getting a truck for that side, for the work, then this is what I’m thinking about. I can’t be taking a load of people around in the back of the truck and telling them what to do. One work truck not enough. You should get a second hand Toyota for the supervisor so he can run around and check up on the work, giving advice. I’ll be giving out different jobs to each people and they’ll be getting busy on all those jobs. So, whoever doesn’t work, then I’ll know about it, and I can put their right hours. It won’t be only one job, they’ll get wood and chop it, and they’ll go and get the sand for the garden and put it around the house, and get the rubbish and take it to the dump. So I’ll be busy running around and that’s what I’m asking for a second hand Toyota, to do that running round. Every night I’ve been thinking about that. Wouldn’t be my Toyota, would be for the CDEP work. (DL4)

⁷⁵⁰ (Glass and Newberry 1990 [1979]).

⁷⁵¹ Myers suggests Western oral narratives are structured by ‘temporal relations’, whereas a ‘framework of spatial coordinates’ punctuates oral narratives in the Western Desert (Myers 1986: 54). Also see Clanchy’s account of the evolution of a socially constructed and ideologically embedded literate process of record keeping and dating documents (Clanchy 1979: 236–41).

⁷⁵² (Wilkins 1991). Klapproth explores ‘the journey’ as a ‘structuring principle’ in Pitjantjatjara oral narratives where the movement of characters from camp to camp ‘forms the structural spine of the narrative’ (Klapproth 2004: 253–258). Temporal duration in oral travelling narratives is prosodically highlighted by the use of verb repetition as a narrative device, as in Ngaanyatjarra: *yankula, yankula, yankula* – going, going, going. According to Rose this device differs from English nominal realisations such as ‘for a very long time’. Rose contrasts the Western Desert realisation representing ‘subjective experience’ with the English objectification of temporal duration as an ‘abstract thing’ (Rose 2001: 47–48).

⁷⁵³ (Glass 1980: 60–69).

More letters ensue, however his various requests for a truck are not fulfilled. So in another letter to the community advisor he adds the following:

One more thing I want to tell you, if I'm still waiting for the truck...Another thing's in my mind too. You know those cars like you got for the office and like Tjirkarli got for CDEP, I should run around checking the name with those sort of *yurlju* [sic] when they are working with the tip truck. It wont [sic] be easy when they are working. I'll make them work hard too. All kinds of jobs I'll be giving out. They'll be busy. I'll make it easy for you, you'll be in the office and I'll be looking after everything outside and they won't bother you. That's why it will be easy for you. That's why I went back on the CDEP so I can work hard on this job. If I do get this job as foreman that means you can put me on the salary because I'll be working hard on this job. (DL5b)

It has been suggested by a non-Aboriginal observer that David takes advantage of his social identity as a literate to seek opportunity for himself through by-passing the normal process of obtaining public consensus in community meetings for personal requests. However, David's missives are eventually formulated as 'publicly available discourse' as exemplified in a letter on the same topic published in the local newsletter, the *Ngaanyatjarra News*.⁷⁵⁴

In another instance, David was angered by staff insensitivity to rules concerning driving on roads during the Law business so he wrote an open letter to all staff (Fig. 4.7) and put it up around the community. The situation was sufficiently extreme to warrant a public exhortation, written in English, aimed specifically at a non-Aboriginal staff audience. The text encodes features of the hortatory speech genre; the admonitory mode often utilised in *yaarlpirri*.⁷⁵⁵ The public posting of the text as a written notice functioned as 'publicly available discourse'.⁷⁵⁶ In social interaction direct criticisms are rare and people strive not to embarrass each other in public, moreover, indirectness, congeniality and tolerance of aberrant behaviour are aspired to.⁷⁵⁷ Although this text admonishes inappropriate behaviour around Business time, it is embedded with ambiguity and congeniality, and the grievance is addressed publicly, rather than directed at individuals.

⁷⁵⁴ (Lieberman 1985: 4); *Ngaanyatjarra News* June 1998: 17–18

⁷⁵⁵ Glass comments that hortatory discourse has variety in the semantic content, but an observable pattern of regular elements that give cohesion to the genre. Woven around exhortations are: 'statements about the status quo, statements that support the exhortation, statements of predictive encouragement concerning the good effects of heeding the exhortation, predictive warnings of the bad effects of ignoring the exhortation, exemplary citations of someone (usually the speaker) who did the right thing and what happened, and even outright ridicule of the addressee if he is pursuing a course of action contrary to that recommended' (Glass 1980: 79).

⁷⁵⁶ (Lieberman 1985: 4).

⁷⁵⁷ (Lieberman 1985). It should be noted that strong emotive displays are also intrinsic to the Ngaanyatjarra nature. People can, for example, be *nganyirri* and display 'explosive violence' (Brooks and Shaw 2003). The pressure to maintain harmony between disparate family groupings can be relieved by public explosions of anger or frustration, expressed as: 'going off', 'getting wild' or 'tempered up'. 'Jealous fights' may lead to older women stripping off and, armed with their *katuru* ('fighting sticks'), performing a stylised *wirri-wirri* ('angry dance'). These 'public proclamations' (Lieberman 1985: 101) are a socially acceptable release of tension after which it is expected that relations quickly return to normal.

Another 'text type' in David's repertoire is the 'legal statement': letters to lawyers regarding court cases and statements for police. David says he writes statements because he has a short memory: 'I might lose all the words what I was saying before, that's why I got to write it down before the police come and ask me all the questions'. In one example, the opening statement declares: "This is what really happened" and the written recount acts as a mnemonic. The paper acts as David's 'witness', indicating that he considers written communication to be more reliable than oral communication, as he explains.⁷⁵⁸

Just for the whitefella to think if I'm telling liar. I got to make sure on the paper, sort of witness, you know...just my witness so the police can find out, come and ask me and I'll say, in this letter, I'll just write it down so he can prove it, that was my writing and my story, so they can know, the police, they might come and ask me if I'm telling liar to them, but they can see this paper...they can prove it on the letter, on the piece of paper.

In summary, David's processes illustrate, to draw on Clanchy, the 'shift' from habitually memorising information to writing it down.⁷⁵⁹ His overtly textual expressions mirror the shaping of the community of interest that took place from the 1970s onwards and his strategies were borne out of that social and political milieu. I now turn the focus of the discussion to the use of literacy as a collective political strategy.

Literacy as a political strategy

In the early 1980s Warburton was a 'squalid' place, 'like a dustbowl, full of drunks, with spearfights almost daily'. Aside from the three or four houses for Aboriginal families, the majority still lived in *wiltja* structures a long way out of town. The community infrastructure was tenuous and further stressed by camp living, poor water and sanitary conditions and the constant demand for firewood. Alcohol and petrol sniffing-related violence, incarceration and deaths were ravaging the community.⁷⁶⁰ Matters had deteriorated to such an extent that in 1980 Warburton was described as the most troubled Aboriginal community in Australia by the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.⁷⁶¹ The difference between then and now is like 'night and day':

Petrol sniffing would generate a lot of tense arguments, it was a very tense, very violent sort of place. Then there was a lot of very problematic, demonstrative behaviour on the part of petrol sniffers racing around, skidding around...A lot of them just sniffed themselves into oblivion, what's around now is better that what was around then. Through the Lands over that period I think it was 29 deaths, but around Warburton it would have been about 18 to 22, from the early 80s through to early 90s, young men predominantly...When you couple that with the ones that weren't petrol, like the car that rolled over and burnt all those people, and then the Laverton smash where you have 5 oldest sons in their early 20s...who had all passed and managed to live through the the Warburton horror of the sniffing period and had all lived and passed out the other side, all got smacked as

⁷⁵⁸ See Clanchy's discussion on the shift to 'trusting' writing over the truth of the spoken word in twelfth century England.

⁷⁵⁹ (Clanchy 1979: 3).

⁷⁶⁰ See (Brady 1992) for an account of substance abuse in remote Australia.

⁷⁶¹ (Blacket 1997: 150).

well...So when you put that with all the petrol sniffing deaths and string it all together, it's very substantial. It was a big swathe of the potential leadership group...there were always people dying, people going off into sorry camps, abandoning houses, continually things like this were going on like this all the time, it was inevitable that you weren't going to get any consistency in anything.⁷⁶²

Petrol and alcohol-related social disruption and deaths caused profound grief and domestic instability. Frequent movement of large numbers of people into 'sorry camps' led to interrupted schooling routines, diminished control over the domestic environment and a reduced capacity to nurture consistency in literacy practices or routines.

The Christian 'Crusades'

As I explain earlier a nascent Christian leadership had been nurtured, but in the 1970s tension between Christianity and the Law simmered and saw a weakening of the church.⁷⁶³ A visit by a Christian evangelical group from Elcho Island in August 1981 initiated what came to be known as the 'Christian Crusades'.⁷⁶⁴ A second visit by the Elcho Island group coincided with the horrific December 1981 car accident in Warburton. This was a pivotal low point that catalysed significant change and precipitated a heightened level of Christian activity:

A lot of people made a decision that instead of getting bogged down in drinking and everything else they just moved out of that and went forward...It gave people experience of actually having a significant leadership role, an Indigenous leadership role in a whole paradigm.⁷⁶⁵

Hundreds of Aboriginal people participated in Christian meetings spreading from Warburton to Laverton, Wiluna, Jigalong and beyond, with the thousands gathering at Mt Margaret, Kalgoorlie and Perth gaining media attention.⁷⁶⁶ It was reported that at Warburton 'purpose and calm have replaced violence and terror' and 'it has happened entirely in the absence of white influence'.⁷⁶⁷

Glass and Hackett have reflected on the evolution of the 'Crusades' leadership group and how its genesis can be attributed to the formation of skills at GBTI. From 1968 to 1975 five Ngaanyatjarra people undertook the two-year course at GBTI.⁷⁶⁸ Clem in particular reflects on his experience:

⁷⁶² McLean—Interview 9/9/04.

⁷⁶³ *United Aborigines Messenger* June 1979:9; UAM Language Department Annual Report, Federal Conference, Melbourne April 1970—NTU files; Report of the UAM, Warburton Ranges, Prepared for UAM State Conference October 1972—NTU files

⁷⁶⁴ Antecedents to the WA event were to be found in the Christian revival movement in the NT starting in March 1979 at Galiwin'ku led by Yolngu people that subsequently spread through Arnhem Land to Warburton, and from there across the Goldfields and Kimberley region (Blacket 1997; Bos 1988).

⁷⁶⁵ McLean—Interview 9/9/04.

⁷⁶⁶ (Blacket 1997). Including Jana Wendt's report for the *7.30 Report* (June 1982).

⁷⁶⁷ *West Australian* April 10 1982: cited in (Blacket 1997: 196).

⁷⁶⁸ (Blacket 1997: 147–148).

In 1971 I went to Bible College...Gnowangerup for 2 years. I was doing English...I was working differently on the spiritual side, the missionaries was doing that time they was training the Aboriginal to go back to learn about the Bible, teach them in a spiritual way. Reading, memorising, understanding. Interpret, talk about it and discuss it...we used to do our own writing, we got to learn like at the school. I was writing with commas, full stops, exclamation thing, marks. All the word...my own writing, that I learn in the school. Just like writing a diary. We gotta do that to write your own sermon down. Then so you'll take funeral things and do your own sermon from the thing.

Through reading and exegesis students at GBTI interpreted complex Christian concepts and acquired sermon writing skills. They also acquired the habitus, the literate and social practices of Christian leadership, and replicated it during the Crusades, as Clem illustrates:

Well, Crusade was a time that's when you have to speak to people then. Make a speech, preaching, but you got to choose a right word to speak and all that. It was the Lord I was talking about, it was the Holy Spirit living. And full Aboriginal people going out to Mt Margaret, Leonora, all that. They were my brothers...and the music was electric guitars. We didn't know nothing about it so we just went along and we taught each other as we went right around to Perth, Geraldton. A lot of leadership, that time I tell them the first thing we do is we got to be clean, bit different to the Aboriginal people today, we got to be, living like white way. But I wasn't thinking like a whitefella I was thinking about a missionary, who taught us to wash and be clean, at Gnowangerup you teach about that. You teach, you got to wash the floor, mop the floor, you got to polish the floor, make the beds. Wear neckties and shave. They teach you how to live, dress up properly and all that. I took that on and put all the respect from that and all the things were different, they were called white people, they were white peoples...I taught, wherever we went a lot of Aboriginal people joined up with us from Leonora, Kalgoorlie, Norseman and I picked out a few people who I thought were like leaders and I taught them how to preach, taught them how speak, taught them how to make movements and look at people. But I never taught them in front of the people, I taught them in the trees. How you dress, you can't come and stand...yeah I taught them all about it...I wrote sermons myself. And I told them if you fellas speak, you got to speak what you read from the Bible. Some of the Team, in my team they all went to Gnowangerup, then when that was finished they went to Perth...I was there in the Crusade.

Preachers such as Clem and George mainly used the English Bible, and the Christian revival led to the sale of 'thousands of dollars worth' of Christian literature.⁷⁶⁹

Ultimately, the Crusades catalysed the growth of an Aboriginal leadership of sufficient strength to lead people out of the devastation of the 1980s.⁷⁷⁰ Experiences outside Warburton mission had enabled this cohort to step forward and overcome their *kurnta* ('shame') and the Crusades built on this. The emergent leadership did not challenge the traditional authority structure and it was not imposed by an outside authority, but arose from within. The approval of senior Law leaders and their participation in evangelical meetings diminished some of the residual conflict between Christianity and traditional

⁷⁶⁹ (Blacket 1997: 165–7).

⁷⁷⁰ Anthropologists (Bos 1988; Sackett 1977; Tonkinson 1988) have sought to understand the significance of the Crusades. Bos notes that in Arnhem Land abstinence from alcohol was a key element in the conversion to the practice of Christianity and this also permeated the West Australian movement (Bos 1988: 432). Tonkinson suggests that the success of the movement can be explained in two ways, either positively...as an outcome of a growing Aboriginal confidence, fed by the progress made in Aboriginal self-management and leading to a sense of greater control in the post-paternalist era, or in more negative terms as a reaction against pressing social problems (Tonkinson 1988: 70–1). Stanton sees the emergence of the 'Desert Crusade' as a response to the frustrations of the 1970s when early expectations engendered by changed Federal policies for community development were 'to a large extent unfulfilled' and many Aboriginal groups experienced the destructive effects of alcohol (Stanton 1988: 303).

religion.⁷⁷¹ This was integral to the success of the young leaders and enabled them to speak with some authority about certain issues. Younger men had previously been excluded from positions of real power and leadership within the Law, however this generation of young men—with knowledge of Western systems and adherence to traditional Law—formed a new power base in the Crusades. The young ‘political’ leader, was not a challenge to the senior men, but a sanctioned requirement of the times.

The formation of a community of interest

Until the mid-1960s Aboriginal people in Australia had been ‘virtually excluded from formal participation’ in political events and full citizenships rights in Western Australia were not attained until 1971.⁷⁷² Yet, within a decade or so, desert people were participating in the political process and using literate strategies that were to radically transform the quality of life for Ngaanyatjarra people. The early 1970s mandated Aboriginal participation in governance and some Ngaanyatjarra also took on leadership roles in local and national domains. George reflects on this period with great eloquence. While acknowledging the difficulty of having been sent away for schooling, he considers that the experience empowered his cohort to be at the ‘frontline’ ready to take on the leadership challenges of the time:

For me, individual for me, I think it was bad some way, I get bad feelings when I been send away, but to think, look back now, I went away to learn something, so I got little bit both feelings...But if I didn't been send away I wouldn't be here now, learning, you know. Because I got all the knowledge, what I been learning in college and all, I would miss out on all that. Most of us my age, our parents worked with the missionaries, looking after the sheep, building the old house, getting the wood. We had to go out and train, you know, work experience then mix up with the whitefellas, working together, then coming back home and doing it yourself...When we came back, we was all ready, those who been in Fairhaven, Pedlar's, we was ready because in that 70s, that's when that change, when the government took over...All those who'd been sent away, we was start to be in the frontline, to start setting up the Council, working for Health, everything, getting the Shire and all, worrying about our own Land, for our roads, health, everything...in my time culture was still strong, it was still strong in that time when government took over...mostly I been away white side, whitefella side, then when I came back I still had time to...I knew it, in my heart but I hadn't been through the Law, so I had to go through first then, learn the Aboriginal way, culture side.

Rather than being weakened and fragmented by the compulsive elements of assimilationist education and training programmes, some Ngaanyatjarra people took advantage of the experience and strategically used their knowledge and skills to form a Ngaanyatjarra community of interest within the new self-determining policy environment. Tutored assimilation had attempted to develop a social orientation away from the Aboriginal family and forge individuated hopes and aspirations linked to the Western world, but social-relatedness and connection to country were to prove more powerful. The young men

⁷⁷¹ McLean—Interview 9/9/04.

returned and went through the Law, thus making the requisite transition in the maturation cycle.⁷⁷³ The leadership cohort that emerged had the strength, will and support of the people to transfer control into the secular domain.⁷⁷⁴ This cohort then consolidated their skills in the leadership arenas emerging in the Ngaanyatjarra Council, the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku and ATSIC.

Ngaanyatjarra Council

On June 24 1980 a meeting to form the Ngaanyatjarra Council was held at Warburton and attended by people from Blackstone, Warakurna and Jameson.⁷⁷⁵ Prior to this, regional governance and representation for Ngaanyatjarra people had been under the Pitjantjatjara Council.⁷⁷⁶ Ngaanyatjarra people had never strongly identified with the Pitjantjatjara Council as the Ngaanyatjarra 'community of interest' is derived from their language and history linked to Warburton Mission and places further west. A unique aspect of the Ngaanyatjarra Council has been its unbroken record of regular monthly meetings since its inception. In the early days governance was an overlay on traditional relationships and people had to learn 'how to co-operate together to do things'. People who returned from South Australia, particularly those from Amata, were more aligned ideologically to the lands rights push from the Pitjantjatjara side and key non-Aboriginal players in Pitjantjatjara Council helped to politicise the nascent Ngaanyatjarra leadership.⁷⁷⁷ Like their Pitjantjatjara kin, Ngaanyatjarra traditional owners also sought inalienable freehold title over their land. The Ngaanyatjarra Council organised a Land Rights convoy to Perth in 1982 to present their views to the WA Government and this consolidated a growing sense of united solidarity and influence on the Ngaanyatjarra side.⁷⁷⁸ In 1984 the Council participated in the Seaman Inquiry into land rights, however land rights legislation in WA

⁷⁷² (Fletcher 1992: 1). Following the 1967 Commonwealth referendum for constitutional change Aboriginal people were finally constituted as part of the national populace, see (Attwood 2003).

⁷⁷³ The imperative to follow the Law in the Western Desert remains strong. To ignore or avoid the Law Business is socially isolating as to *wati* (men) such an individual 'is but a boy—incapable of having a voice in decision-making processes' (Sackett 1977: 90). Similarly, Hamilton describes how in the eastern Western Desert if men evaded the ceremonies by going away to work, even if they had grown to full adulthood and were in their 30s or 40s, these men were regarded as children by older men (Hamilton 1979: 185).

⁷⁷⁴ McLean pers. comm. April 2006.

⁷⁷⁵ Ngaanyatjarra Council (Aboriginal Corporation) was incorporated on March 24 1981 under the Commonwealth's *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976*. The five original member communities were Warburton, Warakurna, Blackstone, Jameson and Wingellina. As a regional representative body Ngaanyatjarra Council has effectively represented the central desert communities for 25 years. The Governing Committee consists of thirteen members—a representative from each of the twelve communities plus an independent chairperson elected annually by majority vote from the membership of the Ngaanyatjarra Council. In October 2006 four new permanent positions were formed on the Governing Committee to be filled by women from the Lands.

⁷⁷⁶ In 1976 the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people formed the Pitjantjatjara Council and the first meeting at Amata was attended by people from almost all communities in the north-west of South Australia and as far as Blackstone and Docker River. It was agreed at that meeting that membership was available to all Anangu irrespective of State borders and the first demand was that the Pitjantjatjara claim all the lands from Indulkana to Docker River. On 4 November 1981, the Pitjantjatjara received freehold title to over 102, 630 sq km of their traditional lands under the *Pitjantjatjara Land Rights Act (1981)* (Toyne and Vachon 1984).

⁷⁷⁷ McLean—Interview 9/9/04.

was defeated in State parliament in 1984.⁷⁷⁹ In November 1988 the Ngaanyatjarra people accepted 99-year leases from the WA government. At the time this was a 'big thing' as they were the only Aboriginal group in WA to gain such a lease.⁷⁸⁰ Then on June 29 2005 Ngaanyatjarra Council gained an historic Native Title Determination the largest in Australia, reached through negotiation, not litigation.⁷⁸¹

A female leadership has also developed under the closely aligned Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPYWC) where women have worked together on projects '*malpararra way*' or as members of the Executive Council.⁷⁸² April, Una and other women have social, cultural and literate processes to represent the needs of women and children at NPYWC. Una recalls:

At meetings there were all sorts of things, to read they used to give us, hand out sheets...and I used to sit down, and read, read, read...I used to read them and understand it and explain to some of the ladies, some of them who don't know how to read.

April comments:

That's what we got to read when we go for meetings...we got a lot of fax in and books from ATSIC, they send us a lot of books, like bulletin, and newsletter, and newsletter from Women's Council.

The leadership cohort also performed governance functions in ATSIC where they were able to represent their people at a regional level within ATSIC Western Desert Regional Council. Jim was an ATSIC Regional Councillor for six years and a member of the WA Education Consultative Group.⁷⁸³

I been away in that ATSIC time, meetings...When I was in the Regional Council that time there was a working party in WA, they called Consultative Group, working for education, adult education and all, do anything with independent schooling and all that. So I joined them, I was on that team, talked

⁷⁷⁸ (Brooks 2002a).

⁷⁷⁹ (Fletcher 1992).

⁷⁸⁰ (Tehan pers. comm. August 2005). Maureen Tehan was a lawyer at Pitjantjatjara Council from 1984-1991, then legal consultant to the Ngaanyatjarra Council from 1991-1994.

⁷⁸¹ The Claim covers some 188,000sq km of land, stretching from the Gibson and Great Victoria Deserts through to the border with SA and the NT and bound by the Spinifex Claim to the south and the Kiwirrkura and Martu Claims to the north and north-west. The Ngaanyatjarra Council, representing all traditional owners resident on the Lands, also oversees the Gibson Desert Nature Reserve and an Indigenous Protected Area in the Central Ranges.

⁷⁸² Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPYWC) was formed in 1980. It grew out of the South Australian Pitjantjatjara Land Rights Struggle in the late 1970s, and still provides a decision-making forum and service delivery function for women across the NPY lands in the cross-border region of WA, NT and SA, particularly in the areas of health, education, cultural, arts and social services. In the context of the NPYWC projects, *malpararra* means two workers 'working together on a project, one of whom is a non-Anangu woman employed for her specific professional skills, and the other a senior Anangu woman' (Woods et al. 1998: 7). NPYWC has been an effective lobby group for social issues affecting Aboriginal people in the Western Desert including demonstrations against alcohol during the 1980s and 1990s and most recently their calls for the roll-out of Opal Fuel across the Central Desert in order to control the ravages of petrol sniffing. See: <http://waru.org/organisations/npywc/>
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200602/s1576324.htm>

⁷⁸³ After 1972, with the formation of the Commonwealth DAA, a Schools Commission was created to give advice on education and the Aboriginal Consultative Group was formed as an advisory body for Aboriginal education (Beresford 2003: 63).

about education every time. Get together and we try and get money for school and place like this one here [College]... We talking about Tjirrkarli, that time, getting all the buildings, school there.

Clem also was 'busy with the government work, very busy':

I used to travel to Perth, Canberra, Alice Springs. I was Teacher Aide for ten years at Warburton School, then Teacher Aide at Tjirrkarli, then Cosmo. Then I came back and I was given role as Chairman of Ngaanyatjarra Council. Then later on... I went back onto drinking and I drink myself away.

George also worked with the State Working Party on Petrol Sniffing to develop education materials.⁷⁸⁴

Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku

Prior to 1984, in remote regions of Western Australia local government authorities (previously known as Road Boards) had 'political autonomy', yet the entire Ngaanyatjarra constituency in the extensive Shire of Wiluna was disenfranchised because they were not rate-paying property owners.⁷⁸⁵ Municipal services, especially roads, were severely neglected in the eastern zone of the Shire that encompassed the Ngaanyatjarra communities. Then in 1984, the *Local Government Act* was amended and this gave the majority Aboriginal composition of the Shire the capacity to vote, with virtually no experience of the election processes of liberal democracy. In 1985, with a large voter turn-out, the first Ngaanyatjarra representative on the Shire of Wiluna Council was elected and this was a 'big event, a big victory'.⁷⁸⁶ Following this success, and aware of the non-compulsory voting requirement in local government elections, the Ngaanyatjarra tactically used an electoral education campaign to increase voter awareness. An Aboriginal majority was reached in the Wiluna Shire election in 1987: two Ngaanyatjarra men and a representative from Ngangganawili Community in Wiluna.⁷⁸⁷ This was 'a highly sophisticated political move and the Ngaanyatjarra leaders understood this strategy and utilised it'.⁷⁸⁸ Key young leaders like George embraced the mainstream forms of governance:

I remember the next election... went to all the community, talked to people so they could vote me in. So we had the election and I was second one into that Council, Wiluna Shire. Every month we used to fly down, we had a small plane, Ngaanyatjarra Council and we used to fly in for the meeting... We had a lot of problem in the Shire... We been having hard time with them pastoralists, so we decide to resign. We had a meeting in Warakurna to resign, then we had another election and most of all from this end been there. Ngaanyatjarra people mostly. During that time we had a rough time with the pastoralists. We been on the *7.30 Report* where they mention about having our own Shire out this way. During that time when we still on we did some travelling round Queensland to look at other Aboriginal Shire Councils... Went to see how they run their Council, Shire Council, local government. Came back, that's when after that we decide to all resign... From there the Minister for Local Government decided that we should have our own Shire.

⁷⁸⁴ (Groom 1988).

⁷⁸⁵ (Fletcher 1992: 1).

⁷⁸⁶ Tehan pers. comm. August 2005.

⁷⁸⁷ (Fletcher 1992: 117).

⁷⁸⁸ Tehan pers. comm. August 2005.

However, by 1986 political recalcitrance on the part of the minority non-Aboriginal Shire Councillors made the Shire unworkable, the Aboriginal Councillors withdrew and the quorum was lost. The WA government then appointed a commissioner to administer the Wiluna Shire. The 'next logical step' was for the Ngaanyatjarra to create their own local government area and have complete control in a manner that would be integrated into existing regional governance structures. A petition was drawn up and sent to the Minister for Local Government to draw up new boundaries and signed by Ngaanyatjarra representatives (Fig. 4.8). In 1993 the first local government election for the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku (formed in what was the eastern zone of the Shire of Wiluna) was held and eight Councillors were elected, unopposed.⁷⁸⁹

The formation of the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku represents the determination of Ngaanyatjarra people to have agency over governance and service delivery. Literate strategies were implemented by the leadership to achieve their political goals. The electoral education campaign was strategically used to ensure that the potency of their recent enfranchisement was fully realized and the majority population participated in the democratic process irrespective of individual literacy competence.⁷⁹⁰ A significant action was the 'petition' sent to the State Minister for Local Government; this, in effect, encoded their claim for real political representation within the mainstream process. By petitioning the Minister, Ngaanyatjarra people were fully aware that they were exploiting their democratic rights as citizens. Their success was achieved with the support of mediators. By using Tehan as a legal mediator people were culturally able to maintain control over the dimensions that were important to the collective, such as 'country', while also controlling the complex process of providing legal instruction to Tehan. The leaders' ability to code-switch between two languages, Ngaanyatjarra and English, and between two cultural domains and 'Laws' and this gave them significant rhetorical power. Strategically, the Ngaanyatjarra were able to pursue their goal of 'making a name for themselves in civil society' and to demonstrate their capacity to act as a community of interest.⁷⁹¹ High voter participation continues in Shire elections.⁷⁹² The Shire Council remains an important site for the development of a governance style that differs from that of the Ngaanyatjarra

⁷⁸⁹ (Tehan pers. comm. August 2005). The Shire comprises nine of the Ngaanyatjarra communities. Cosmo Newbery falls within the boundaries of the Shire of Laverton and Kiwirrkura within the Shire of East Pilbara. The Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku offices are based in Warburton and provide services in a manner comparable with any local government, over an area of some 159,948 sq kms. It maintains a majority Aboriginal population and a majority Aboriginal elected Council. <http://www.tjulyuru.com/shirehist.asp>

⁷⁹⁰ Elections for the chair of community councils, the chair of Ngaanyatjarra Council and the Executive of NPY Women's Council are based on a process of public and collective transparency where votes are made as marks against a name or marbles placed in a box representing a candidate.

⁷⁹¹ Tehan pers. comm. August 2005

Council because of the necessity to adhere to the strict parameters of local government rules and regulations. Over subsequent years, despite the highly legalistic and bureaucratic nature of the oral and written discourse encountered in Shire Council meetings, 'literacy has never been an impediment' as Councillors are skilled in listening, reflecting, deliberating and thinking through issues.⁷⁹³

A perception has grown since the 1970s among some Ngaanyatjarra that they experienced economic disadvantage, political isolation and fewer training opportunities in comparison with their Pitjantjatjara kin across the border.⁷⁹⁴ In retrospect, however, these factors contributed to the assertion of a perseverant and independent Ngaanyatjarra identity. This is summed up in Brooks' recollection of 'Joshua', the long time Ngaanyatjarra Council Chairman, who would remind people at Council meetings:

We started this Ngaanyatjarra Council from ourselves, self-help, we had chuck-in... We didn't wait for the government to give us something or we didn't sit here and wait for somebody else to do things for us. We wanted to get a Council started and we did it... Now we look around us and we see what we have got. We got to remember that that's the way we did it and we've got to be proud of our Council and proud of these communities and what we've got now. We've done that because the people have worked hard.

Brooks suggests that there was a bit of mythologising involved, but also a kernel of truth.⁷⁹⁵ A strong Ngaanyatjarra identity and sense of place in the world has been galvanised by the cumulative effect of 'little successes' and dedicated non-Aboriginal support over many years.⁷⁹⁶ Underpinning the strength of the Ngaanyatjarra community is the role of the senior men and women who have 'primary responsibility for the performance of ceremony, which keeps the physical and metaphysical world in harmony and balance, for the benefit of all people'.⁷⁹⁷ In 2002, the Ngaanyatjarra Council established the *Tjilpi* Committee and

⁷⁹² (Thurtell 2003).

⁷⁹³ McLean—Interview 9/9/04.

⁷⁹⁴ In the NT Aboriginal people were paid a 'training allowance' for work and some received 'on-the-job training' and 'off-settlement courses' (Rowley 1972b: 122-3). The training of Pitjantjatjara teachers was addressed relatively early by the SA government (Penny 1975). Although the implementation of training for Aboriginal teachers in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands was a priority of the Tri-State Project (Tri-State Project 1990) it came to nought and Ngaanyatjarra Aboriginal Education Workers (AEW) were rapidly left behind, especially as their peers had started Anangu Teacher Education Programme (AnTEP) training in SA in 1984, and Remote Area Teacher Education (RATE) training through Batchelor College in 1987. A few Ngaanyatjarra AEWs commenced training, however as it was not systemic and there were few completions. There are still no qualified Ngaanyatjarra teachers in the WA Department of Education Remote Community Schools.

⁷⁹⁵ Brooks—Interview 15/8/04.

⁷⁹⁶ (Tehan pers. comm. August 2005). In 1982 a Ngaanyatjarra Council administrative office was established in Alice Springs for pragmatic reasons due to shared services with Pitjantjatjara Council, the location of DAA and other Commonwealth Departments in Alice Springs and the location of the Ngaanyatjarra Air service in Alice Springs after the first plane was bought in 1982. The first paid employees of Ngaanyatjarra Council came in 1983. Following this, Ngaanyatjarra Council established a significant economic and organisational structure including Ngaanyatjarra Services (Aboriginal Corporation) in 1986, Ngaanyatjarra Health Service (Aboriginal Corporation) in 1987 and Ngaanyatjarra Land Council (Aboriginal Corporation) in 1988, Ngaanyatjarra Agency and Transport Service in 1984, Ampol (subsequently Caltex) distributorship in 1986 plus the Indervon Co., and a 40% share in Marshall Laurence Pty Ltd insurance broker in 1998. (Ngaanyatjarra Council 2000: 167).

⁷⁹⁷ (Brooks and Shaw 2003: 23).

Fig. 4.8 Petition concerning formation of the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT
SHIRE OF WILUNA**

To His Excellency Sir Francis Theodore Page Burt, C.O.E.,
K.C.M.G., Q.C., Governor in and over the State of Western
Australia and its Dependencies in the Commonwealth of
Australia.

We, the undersigned electors within the Municipality of the
Shire of Wiluna do hereby pray for your Excellency to
exercise the powers conferred upon you by virtue of Section
12(1)(c) of the Local Government Act 1960 (as amended) to
authorise the constitution of a new shire as hereinafter
described:

- (1) The municipality of the Shire of Wiluna is a Shire
constituted under the Local Government Act 1960 (as
amended from time to time).
- (2) The Signatories of the petition would be eligible to be
registered as electors on the electoral role of the new
shire to be known as the Ngaanyatjarraku Shire as
hereinafter described in paragraph (3).
- (3) The petitioners
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of longitude
Shire.
- (4) The petitione
power conferr
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Ngaanyatjarra

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boundary of

This is the
Statutory D
the 18th

[Signature]
Signature
person to

- 5) Notice to the petitioners may be served on D McLean C/-
Warburton Community, PMB 71, Alice Springs, 0871.
- (5) The person to whom any deposit required under Section
26 may be refunded is D McLean.

And your petitioners will ever so humbly pray.

[Signature]
D McLEAN

Joe Munroe
Rudley Nelson
Roma Holland

[Signature]
Andar Khan
Murray Wells
Sunny Lewis
[Signature]
(Henry Giles)
ANDREW WATSON
[Signature]
Myra Lawson
Lalla West
IRAN Shepherd
Dorcy Munroe
+ (Arthur Robertson)
Nellie Roberts
[Signature]
L. Gerrish
Jarome Ward

This is the Annexure marked "A" referred to in the
Statutory Declaration of Damian McLean made the
day of _____ 1991.

[Signature]
Signature and qualification
of person taking the declaration
COMMISSIONER FOR OATHS
2 Wilkeson St, Alice Springs

Source: Maureen Tehan.

Fig. 4.9 Letter concerning Ngaanyatjarra Council By-Laws 1987

NGAANYATJARRA COUNCIL
(ABORIGINAL CORPORATION)

P.O. Box 2189
Alice Springs, N.T. 5750

Telephone: (089) 52 3655
Telex: 81151
Fax: (089) 52 6371
Ngaanyatjarra Air Charter Office:
Telephone: (089) 52 4367

8th September, 1987

Our Ref: RB:gp: 86/63 B(D)

Honourable E. Bridge, MLA
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
Capita Centre
197 St. George's Terrace
PERTH W.A. 6000

Dear Mr. Bridge.



RE: NGAANYATJARRA COUNCIL BY-LAWS

I refer to the discussions which took place with you about by-laws at the Ngaanyatjarra Council meeting in July at Warakarna. The Council members were especially concerned about "grog" on the Ngaanyatjarra lands and about petrol sniffing and wanted by-laws to make possession of "grog" and petrol and glue sniffing an offence. You agreed to the Council being given the power to make by-laws for this purpose under the Aboriginal Communities Act.

Having considered the by-laws in existence for La Grange, we are also keen to have by-laws giving the Council the power to give entry permits. This is appropriate since control and management is to pass to the Ngaanyatjarras under the proposed 99 year lease.

I now enclose draft by-laws, which the Council at its meeting last month at Wingellina resolved to make. These by-laws can of course only be made after the Governor has made a declaration pursuant to Section 4(b) of the Aboriginal Communities Act that Ngaanyatjarra Council is a Community to which that Act applies. For this purpose, we also enclose a copy of the Ngaanyatjarra Council Constitution and of its Certificate of Incorporation.

Yours sincerely,



Secretary, Ngaanyatjarra Council

An Incorporation of Ngaanyatjarra Aboriginal Communities.

the equivalent women's committee known as the *Minyma Pampa* Committee to give authority to the voice of senior Ngaanyatjarra men and women within the official Council structure.

Law and order

Ultimately, the Ngaanyatjarra were also able to implement strategies to curtail the ravaging impact of alcohol and substance abuse by exploiting the mechanisms of law and order from mainstream Australia (Fig. 4.9). The passing of the *Aboriginal Communities Act 1979* (WA) enabled the Ngaanyatjarra Council to utilise Sections under the Act to create By-Laws that allowed them to assert a 'standard of acceptable behaviour as determined by the Communities'.⁷⁹⁸ The By-Laws were gazetted in July 1989. McLean perceives that the development of law and order on the Ngaanyatjarra Lands has been critical to the success of the region:

The By-Laws regarding alcohol were crucial in the establishment of a good relationship with police and the Department of Justice, unlike in other places for example in the Pitjantjatjara Lands where there is no police presence and not the security that results from that, nor the development of positive relationship with police.

According to Ngaanyatjarra Council lawyer Leanne Stedman, Ngaanyatjarra people have a 'strong sense of ownership' over the By-Laws and have argued strongly for an effective police presence on the Lands to enforce the By-Laws and thus ensure community safety:⁷⁹⁹

Because of the influence of white ways of doing things, we as Aboriginal people are using part of the white system now to fill in the gaps. It's our law in that we requested it for the protection of our wellbeing. We're using their system to make it work for us.⁸⁰⁰

In Ngaanyatjarra society the 'autonomy' of the individual remains a core value.⁸⁰¹ Imposing one's moral authority over other individuals, or families, and commanding them to cease drinking or sniffing is virtually impossible for a Ngaanyatjarra person to enact. Police intervention provides the critical, additional regulatory authority that allows individuals to act to control alcohol or substance abuse.⁸⁰² Unfortunately, with the introduction of the *Sentencing Act 1995* (WA), sentencing options and penalties for offences under the *Communities Act* have been amended with less than satisfactory consequences.

⁷⁹⁸ (Staples and Cane 2002: 21).

⁷⁹⁹ Contrary to recent suggestions by the WA Law Reform Commission that the By-Laws were 'imposed'. Law Reform Commission of Western Australia (Discussion Paper December 2005) *Part V - Aboriginal Customary Law and the Criminal Justice System: Aboriginal community justice mechanisms*. Aboriginal Customary Law Publications, pp. 115–121. http://www.lrc.justice.wa.gov.au/Aboriginal/DiscussionPaper/Part_05D.pdf (download 5/7/06).

⁸⁰⁰ Quote from a Community Chairman, 2006 cited in Stedman, L. (2006) Ngaanyatjarra Communities Submission to the WALRC Discussion paper on 'Aboriginal Customary Laws' – April 2006. Alice Springs: Ngaanyatjarra Council.

⁸⁰¹ (Myers 1986: 22).

After the initial optimism of self-determination, desert people had to confront the unfulfilled expectations of self-management. Incrementally, the gap between expectation and reality widened and increasing numbers of non-Aboriginal people were employed to manage the ever more complex infrastructure. The 'self-determining' generation who grew up in this period encountered profound social disruption that fragmented their world. As they moved through their formative years they observed more whitefellas entering their realm and taking control with concomitantly fewer opportunities for their parents or their peer group to use or consolidate the European skills and practices they had acquired. Long-time observers suggest that unlike the milieu of interdependence and working together of previous periods, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people began to live in separate communities and, despite their numerical dominance and indisputable status as traditional land owners, the Ngaanyatjarra had 'lost their community' and 'lost their power'. The older generation, aggrieved by the humiliating loss of control over social space and the progressive devaluation and marginalisation of past practices and beliefs, have responded by distancing themselves from European practices and interpreting self-determination from their own cultural perspective, that is by asserting control in separate domains, especially the ceremonial domain.⁸⁰³

Ultimately, however, this period saw the evolution of a new, politicised Ngaanyatjarra collective able to deal with the contingencies of the era. The people were instrumental in establishing their own communities and creating a governance structure that transformed the quality of life for the broad community of interest. In addition, their various levels of education and literacy competence matched the requirements of the time and they were able to build on their accumulated habitus.

Conclusion

There is a belief among some Ngaanyatjarra that the model of schooling experienced by earlier generations created the leadership cohort and since then schooling has failed to deliver the expected outcomes.⁸⁰⁴

⁸⁰² Prior to 2006 police posts in Warburton and Warakurna were manned by police from Laverton Police Station. A permanent police presence exists with the erection of Multi Function Police Facilities at Warburton and Warakurna (and Kintore, NT) and a new Magistrate's Court of Petty Sessions at Warburton.

⁸⁰³ Other anthropological literature refers to the existence of separate Aboriginal 'domains' within the space of contemporary community life (Smith 2005; von Sturmer 1984; Trigger 1992).

⁸⁰⁴ Despite significant investment of Commonwealth and State funding in Aboriginal education over the past few decades there has been growing concern about literacy outcomes. In the Ngaanyatjarra Lands concern has been expressed by government, education providers and Ngaanyatjarra people themselves. Over the years numerous reviews and reports, research projects have been undertaken and education initiatives flagged (Goddard et al. 2000; Heslop 1997; Heslop 1998; Kerr 1989; Kerr et al. 2001; NLLIA 1996; Tomlinson Report 1994; Tri-State Project 1990). In 2000 the Ngaanyatjarra Council conducted a review of education and training (Kral and Ward 2000). This grew out of the keenly felt sentiment that education was outside of the control of the Ngaanyatjarra Council. A Memorandum of Agreement between the

A lot of Ngaanyatjarra people who went to school here were well-educated—they are the leaders. Fairly well-educated compared to what children are getting now.⁸⁰⁵

This phenomenon has been critiqued by other researchers as ‘the myth in the collective education memory of a Golden Age’.⁸⁰⁶ Clearly, hundreds of Ngaanyatjarra children have had some experience of schooling since 1936. However as shown in preceding chapters, we must also be mindful of the circumstances (social, cultural, historical, political and economic) that precipitated the activation and consolidation of literate practices. Many in the leadership group spent their formative years observing their elders participate in textually mediated Christian practices. In this chapter we see how people’s literate processes matched the requirements of the time and people were ‘as literate as the tasks required’.⁸⁰⁷ Literacy skills were acquired through pedagogy and maintained, as April expresses it, ‘from a lifetime, doing all that skill’. We see adults shifting between oral and literate modes, with some adults developing writing habits, but others using shared or communal literacy strategies.⁸⁰⁸ Literate modes and conventions were utilised to serve people’s own ideological purposes. We see, for instance, letter-writing used to address two pressing social and cultural needs: to maintain social relatedness and to look after country. For some Ngaanyatjarra it is these wider circumstances, rather than the pedagogical circumstances *per se*, that generated a ‘shift in ways of thinking and acting’ towards a developing ‘literate mentality’ in only two generations.⁸⁰⁹

In *Part I* I have explored how literacy is ‘historically situated’ and ‘culturally shaped’.⁸¹⁰ By considering the social meaning of literacy practices for participants, and the ‘ideological’ rather than ‘technical’ nature of literacy I have brought to the fore the circumstances that have supported literacy development and those that have worked against it.⁸¹¹ In *Part II* I continue this approach to literacy, but move to a synchronic description of how literacy is used in everyday practice. I follow the families that have been introduced in *Part I* and explore how they, their children and their grandchildren use literacy in contemporary community life.

Western Australian government and the Ngaanyatjarra Council established the Ngaanyatjarra Education Area. This Agreement has also purportedly failed (Goddard et al. 2005) and the Ngaanyatjarra Council is now embarking on an ‘Education Training and Lifelong Learning’ Shared Responsibility Agreement with the Federal government.

⁸⁰⁵ Data from (Kral and Ward 2000).

⁸⁰⁶ (NLLIA 1996: 17, Vol. 3).

⁸⁰⁷ (Clanchy 1979: 219)

⁸⁰⁸ (Kell 2000).

⁸⁰⁹ Clanchy emphasises that in medieval England it took two centuries for literate habits, ‘ways of thinking and acting’, to develop (Clanchy 1979: 3).

⁸¹⁰ (Barton and Hamilton 1998; Kulick and Stroud 1993).

⁸¹¹ (Street 1984: 111).

PART II

CHAPTERS 5 – 8

CHAPTER 5 Literacy and the ‘practice of everyday life’

Introduction

In *Part II* of the thesis I move away from the past and focus on the present. By looking at literacy from a synchronic perspective I throw a spotlight on the Ngaanyatjarra now and explore the interwoven nature of literacy in the ‘practice of every day life’.⁸¹² I continue to incorporate a ‘practice-centred’ approach to consider, as Merlan terms it, the ‘generationally differentiated’ nature of practice, and to shed light on how the influences of the past permeate the present.⁸¹³ I refer back to Barton and Hamilton’s propositions outlined in Chapter 1 and view literacy as a set of social practices that can be inferred from events which are textually mediated, purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices. From this perspective ‘literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making’ in accordance with social and cultural processes.⁸¹⁴

I also draw on other theorists who take a practice-centred approach to language and literacy and I take account of the spatio-temporal determinants of social practice in domestic and public domains.⁸¹⁵ Linguistic anthropologists, in particular, have paid attention to the ‘spatio-temporal anchoring of linguistic expressions’ by examining language and social (or indexical) meanings and interaction in social space and the built environment.⁸¹⁶ The manner in which habitus ‘orients and naturalizes’ people’s action in social space has been considered by William Hanks who suggests that corporeal practices, ways of inhabiting space and ways that objects in space are used rest on ‘an immense stock of social knowledge’ and this knowledge which appears natural, is moreover, socially constructed.⁸¹⁷ From Ortner we understand that ‘human action or interaction’, as an

⁸¹² (de Certeau 1984).

⁸¹³ Francesca Merlan asserts that ‘experience and practical knowledge of living in places is generationally differentiated, as one might expect given considerable change in the forms of Aboriginal life’ (Merlan 1998: 77). Change and adaptation are commonly explored themes in Australian anthropology (Berndt 1977; Sackett 1990; Stanton 1988; Tonkinson 1974; Wallace 1990) with some writers focusing on the formation of community and adaptation to community living (Folds 2001; Martin 1993; White 1977; Woenne 1977). Merlan considers, however, that some ethnographies do not examine sufficiently ‘contemporary social practices’ and ‘ways of living in place’ (Merlan 1998: 77).

⁸¹⁴ (Barton and Hamilton 1998: 7; Barton and Tusting 2005).

⁸¹⁵ Theorists who take a practice-centred approach to language include (Ahearn 2001b; Bauman and Briggs 1990; Hanks 1990; Ochs 1988). See also (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]).

⁸¹⁶ (Duranti 1997: 321–28).

⁸¹⁷ (Hanks 1990: 7). See also (Levinson and Wilkins 2006; Ochs 1993).

instance of practice, can only be considered in relation to the structures or cultural schemas that shape it.⁸¹⁸ Ortner considers that:

...cultural schemas may become deeply embedded in actors' identities, as a result of actors growing up within a particular cultural milieu, and as a result of practices (social, ritual, and so on) that repeatedly nourish the schema and its place within the self. In consequence, actors will tend to 'do the cultural thing' under most circumstances, and even in some cases under inappropriate circumstances.⁸¹⁹

The Ngaanyatjarra world and the non-Aboriginal, or 'whitefella', world are now 'socially and spacially interconnected' and literacy is one of the threads that binds social practice in 'diverse and intercultural arenas'.⁸²⁰ Yet, as I will attempt to make explicit throughout *Part II*, although social interaction has been propelled away from 'pre-established precepts or practices' into the norms and routines of Western patterns of time and space usage, some sort of 'ordering function' or 'cultural schema' is operating across disparate, often textually-mediated, social situations and practices.⁸²¹

Transformed practices

The *tjukurrpa* provides an underpinning metaphysics that incorporates a 'changeless, timeless, permanence', it is the enduring 'moral authority' that lies outside individuals and underpins everyday life in the 'symbolic space'.⁸²² Control over the symbolic space is maintained by persistent cultural collective belief systems. Sorcery and the supernatural (manifest in apprehension or fear of unknown or malevolent forces) are, for instance, part of the perceived reality that underpins everyday life.⁸²³ Despite the permanency of this ontology, on a day to day level the Ngaanyatjarra still struggle with the changed power dynamic, the diminished authority of elders, and the assumed authority of the state and non-Aboriginal value systems.

In the past the reproduction and transmission of Ngaanyatjarra cultural practice was oral, and with no written record, the signifiers of linguistic and cultural change were imperceptible, embedded in memory and incorporated over many generations. Over time, with exposure to cars and planes and the increasing frequency of travel, people experienced the speeding up of time. A man whose first sighting of white people was in the 1960s, describes his reaction to speed when sitting on a moving truck for the first time: 'thought it

⁸¹⁸ (Ortner 1989: 12).

⁸¹⁹ (Ortner 1989: 127).

⁸²⁰ (Merlan 1998: 146).

⁸²¹ (Giddens 1991: 20; Ortner 1989: 60).

⁸²² (Myers 1986: 69).

⁸²³ See (Maher 1999; Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council Aboriginal Corporation 2003; Reid 1983).

was tree running, so start sick up'.⁸²⁴ Modernity, the advent of globalisation, and the massive technological changes since the 1970s have radically changed the course of everyday life.⁸²⁵ Technology now immortalises the present and records change, creating a 'modern kind of collective memory'.⁸²⁶ Temporal rhythms in the past were experienced within nature and space, through the seasons, the cycles of the sun, moon and stars and the interrelated patterns of hunting and gathering, social relatedness and ceremonial cycles, so there was a 'concordance of time and space'.⁸²⁷ The Western world then introduced 'metronomic' cultural practices; measurable time, measurable development and performance, punctuality, a morality around how time should be spent and chronologically-determined rituals were acquired—Christmas, New Year, Easter, baptisms and weddings.⁸²⁸ For the Ngaanyatjarra the passage of time altered as calendrical time and introduced temporal parameters became habitual.⁸²⁹ Social practices were reorganised and social identities reshaped to conform to the requirements of schooling and other Western institutions. A new framework for everyday life introduced the expectation that children and adolescents would go to school and become workers within a Western spatio-temporal cultural paradigm. Nevertheless, despite non-Aboriginal attempts to restructure temporal routines; unpredictable patterns and events—travel to sorry camps, funerals or football—interrupt everyday life. In a non-metronomic life there is little need for diaries, calendars or other mnemonic strategies for keeping track of time and this is often a source of conflict between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal world. Mainstream practices—training, employment and governance—are controlled by chronologically regulated rhythms. Few people have watches or clocks and so time is regulated by the school siren, TV or radio time calls and other strategies. Shop hours suit a '9 to 5' working paradigm and are not conducive to the needs of locals who have less structured home lives.

The Ngaanyatjarra encounter with Western materialism has also demanded a conceptual adjustment to the way that space, and the objects in space, are used. Previously normative socio-spatial and corporeal practices have been re-oriented around the built environment and the normative values and dispositions of introduced domestic practice are being transmitted as habitus to the next generation. Rosie and Harold's granddaughter Rosemary describes how only two generations previously families were from:

⁸²⁴ Data from (Kral and Ward 2000).

⁸²⁵ See (Appadurai 1996; Gee 2000; Giddens 1999; Giddens 1991; Hulsemeyer 2003).

⁸²⁶ (Young 1988: 207). See also (Mead 1978 [1970]).

⁸²⁷ (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 267).

⁸²⁸ (Young 1988).

⁸²⁹ See (Musharbash 2003; Poirier 2005).

...all different places in the bush, rockholes, they moved to Warburton, they was staying in the *wiltja* long time ago. Hard life, they used to walk around in the hot heat. They used to carry the kids on their back and walk along, going place to place to the rockholes, camping at night and walking in the daytime. They was go hunting in the bush.

Whereas now, she remarks, families live 'all in the house, drinking water from the tap!'⁸³⁰ Molly says she is 'really proud' of her daughter who 'lives in her own house' and has 'her own things':

They got their own fridge, frying pan, car, anything they can have, firewood of their own. That's got to be strong, that's how you make them strong to look after their own things.

Una also incorporates Western values into her aspirations for her grandchildren:

I'd like to see my grandchildren having a good house and having a good *kurri* to look after and working and happy family, like that... Little kids to go to school, important, very important thing is school... so they can learn more and more and more and they can get *ninti*... They might start living like a proper person who might speak up: 'We want new houses, we might build more and more houses, and maybe a big shop.' Like that.

The generational shift is palpable. Young people 'want houses now because they've seen other people use them, and they've got TV, video and they want a stove to cook on... they're seeing it on TV and in all different places, so this sort of stuff starts to work its way through' and many homes contain the consumer items of mainstream domesticity.⁸³¹ Nevertheless, continuity with the past is signified in housing located according to cardinal directions reflecting socio-spatial origins.⁸³²

Text has also seeped its way into domestic and public space: on signs, notices, artwork, and t-shirts. Walls, floors, doors and windows are all surfaces for writing phone numbers, names, messages or graffiti. Social interaction remains, nonetheless, primarily oral and gestural, and many Ngaanyatjarra live without needing to read, write or calculate much at all. There are, however, individuals who incorporate literate behaviours and strategies into the practice of everyday life. In this chapter I explore what people do with text in the visible and less visible arenas of everyday life, and the resources, strategies, roles and domains of use associated with literacy events and practices. These are set against assessed

⁸³⁰ This quote also reveals the centrality of *kapi* ('water') in Ngaanyatjarra secular and spiritual life. Brooks talks of two types of *kapi*: firstly 'freely available water, not created by Dreaming Beings', i.e. seasonal rain water, ephemeral water sources with 'no sacred associations'. Another type of *kapi* is spring water that 'wells up from the earth' and is 'guarded by powerful beings' *warnampi* ('mythological water snakes') and has 'sacred associations'. 'Both sorts of water have always been part of the life of *yarnangu*, but it is plain to see that by far the greater value applies to the spring water. This is the "personal", known water, what might be called the "life blood" of *yarnangu* that has been specially given to them by the Dreaming. This is the water that *yarnangu* really need, that they can always fall back on, that is to be found "at home". The other water, originating from external agency, is an extra, allowing another (less social) dimension to life. But it is ephemeral and unreliable, and in this it functions as a contrast to the other, underlining the latter's centrality to life and to the 'cycle of creation' (Brooks 2002c: 15).

⁸³¹ McLean—Interview 9/9/04.

⁸³² A continuity of spatially relative orientations to 'country' is noted in the Australian anthropological literature (Hamilton 1979; Merlan 1998; Sansom 1980). Myers found with the Pintupi that 'orientation in space is a prime concern' (Myers 1986: 54).

standards of adult literacy competence to highlight that through ethnography a richer and more nuanced picture of the literacy environment emerges than one revealed by decontextualised measures of literacy proficiency.⁸³³ I utilise the metaphor of ‘visibility’ – *yuti*, and ‘invisibility’ – *yarrkayi* to demonstrate a bifurcation apparent in everyday life.⁸³⁴ Barton and Hamilton assert, and I concur, that powerful institutions, (schools and workplaces) tend to support the visible or ‘dominant literacy practices’, which ‘can be seen as part of whole discourse formations, institutionalised configurations of power and knowledge which are embedded in social relationships’, whereas the ‘vernacular literacies which exist in people’s everyday lives are less visible and less supported’.⁸³⁵

Literacy in the domestic space

Despite changes at a superficial level, Ngaanyatjarra construction of lived space cannot be understood in isolation from the transformation of space in accordance with regular principles and recurrent schemata.⁸³⁶ Oral interactions and Ngaanyatjarra semiotic resources remain associated with deeply layered mythological space. Spatial practice, especially for older people, operates at the intersection of ‘diachronic and synchronic’ time: the synchronic town grid (superimposed by the mission and subsequent town planning) overlays the deeply felt ‘spaces, rhythms or polarities’ of the diachronic relationship with country and *tjukurrpa*.⁸³⁷ In comparison, the social construction of literate modes of interaction is synonymous with the built environment—a space with a short history, that is, literally, superficial.

Western society has developed what Lefebvre terms a spatial code ‘as a means of living in that space, of understanding it, and producing it’.⁸³⁸ Practice theorists suggest that social practice produces and reproduces the meaning of space:

Inhabited space—starting with the house—is the privileged site of the objectification of the generative schemes, and, through the divisions and hierarchies it establishes between things, between peoples and between practices, this materialized system of classification inculcates and

⁸³³ (Street 1984).

⁸³⁴ *Yuti*—1. (adjective, adverb) ‘bare, exposed to view, visible, clear (Glass and Hackett 2003: 602). *Yarrkayi*—1. (adverb) ‘blurred, indistinct’; 2. (adverb) ‘invisibly’ (Glass and Hackett 2003: 560-61). These are not emic categories, locals do not categorise the world in this way.

⁸³⁵ (Barton and Hamilton 1998: 10). The term ‘vernacular literacy’ refers originally to reading and writing in the first language or mother tongue as in the 1953 UNESCO axiom (Bull 1964). More recently the terms ‘vernacular’ (Camitta 1993) or ‘hybrid’ (Cushman and Emmons 2002) literacies have been used to refer to non-standard written forms.

⁸³⁶ See (Lawrence and Low 1990; Robben 1989; White 1977) for discussions on the anthropology of the domestic or built space. In her exploration of Warlpiri domestic space Musharbash notes that despite the similarity of the physical structure Warlpiri use of domestic space is ‘distinctly different’ from Western usage (Musharbash 2003). In Musharbash’s ethnography there are virtually no references to literacy use within the domestic space, despite Western schooling in the Warlpiri region and the strength of Warlpiri literacy (Gale 1997; Hoogenraad 2001).

⁸³⁷ (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 164).

⁸³⁸ (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 47–48).

constantly reinforces the principles of the classification which constitutes the arbitrariness of a culture.⁸³⁹

The interrelationship between social practice and how 'inside' space is used is attributable to the long history of 'things in space' including the 'ordinary objects of daily life' in Western society.⁸⁴⁰ In Western 'middle-class' literate homes normative assumptions are made about the ordering of domestic space and literacy practice. Literacy artefacts are categorised and stored in cupboards or bookshelves, and documents are alphabetically indexed in filing cabinets according to assumed systematic practice. The habit of living in the built space builds up socio-spatial typification and congruent interaction. The collocation of objects in domestic space depends on a shared understanding of how the world is ordered and the relationship between objects, in much the same way that the collocation of semantic and grammatical categories in written text depends upon similarly shared schematic knowledge. As 'good readers read' they acquire the habit of textual collocation (i.e. a familiarity with English written discourse where deictic expressions determine textual organisation by maintaining the cohesion of anaphoric, cataphoric and exophoric chains of reference), so the habit of living in the built space builds up socio-spatial typification and congruent interaction and corporeal dispositions.⁸⁴¹ I return again to consider that 'habitualized actions' become embedded as 'routines' or 'taken for granted actions' only when 'reciprocal typification of habitualized actions' build up through 'shared history'.⁸⁴² As Hanks suggests: the 'automatization of practice produces schematic knowledge' that has a 'corporeal dimension'; people's 'habitual postures and orientations make up a schematic background that is in play whenever they engage in talk', and I would add, in literate processes.⁸⁴³

Highly literate Europeans assume common-sense domestic socio-spatial corporeal and linguistic routines. Social meanings are sedimented in the routine actions of what Goffman terms 'participation frameworks' and the artefacts (houses, rooms, furniture, pen and paper) that 'allow us to interface with one another in particular ways'.⁸⁴⁴ In contrast, traditional Ngaanyatjarra life was oriented towards the overarching taxonomic categories of the natural world and the sociality, values, norms and practices that allowed people to act coherently in that environment.⁸⁴⁵ Over the last decade or so, generationally differentiated domestic habits and routines have emerged in the wake of sedentarisation and the slow

⁸³⁹ (Bourdieu 1990 [1980]: 76). See also (Bourdieu 1977; de Certeau 1984).

⁸⁴⁰ (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 116).

⁸⁴¹ (Halliday and Hasan 1976; Hanks 1990).

⁸⁴² (Berger and Luckmann 1975 [1966]: 70–85).

⁸⁴³ (Hanks 1990: 150).

⁸⁴⁴ (Duranti 1997: 318–19). See also (Goffman 1981).

shift to houses, remembering that constructed domestic space for most people did not become the norm until the late 1980s and early 1990s. The generations who spent their formative years living in a *wiltja* were socialised into the socio-spatial orientation of a domestic environment without 'closed or secret places' for the enactment of literacy habits and the organisation of literacy artefacts.⁸⁴⁶ Although we are now seeing young people who have been socialised into living in the built environment exhibiting changed corporeal dispositions and habits, inclusive of literacy, as normative social practice, nevertheless, as Ortnier intimates, a tendency to 'do the cultural thing' may still take precedence over the Western classificatory principles underlying literate practice.

Literacy and the social capacity to control domestic space

Ngaanyatjarra domestic space remains oriented towards outside space. The social logic of the household 'camp' accommodates avoidance relationships and the approach of strangers but these do not map neatly onto the bounded parameters of the built house. Despite the availability of housing, the nuclear family household is a rarity and most people prefer to live in interconnected multi-generation households where housing allocation is determined by social factors rather than by the capacity to pay rent (see Appendix G). Houses are noisy social spaces occupied by fluctuating members of the extended family; people come and go, cars drive in and out, babies cry, children scream, adults call out across the open space between houses, and stereos and TVs resound in the background.

A developing consumer consciousness and increasing access to material goods and purchasing power has introduced new cultural concepts: private property and padlocked space. Concomitant with this new materiality is the tangential requirement of literacy; the perceived need to look after and protect *things*. Anthropologist Annette Hamilton observes that as materiality entered the Pitjantjatjara world in the 1970s, social and cultural reasons accounted for why adults were unable to maintain everyday objects.⁸⁴⁷ For instance, preventing children from doing things to everyday objects that fell outside 'the traditional framework of objects to be avoided' (i.e. *not* objects of a secret or sacred nature) was difficult to enact if it involved punishing another person's child or led to accusations of being 'mean' or 'ungenerous'. According to Hamilton, in relation to the 'free giving and getting' of secular objects it is assumed that one does not deny access to others. The prioritisation and enhancement of social relationships through sharing contrasts with a Western perspective on the 'proper' care of objects which assumes that objects be

⁸⁴⁵ See (Kopytoff 1986).

⁸⁴⁶ (Nicholls 2000: 89).

perceived as 'continuing assets' which must endure into an 'unspecified future time'. Literacy practice rests on the ownership of, and control over the materiality of literacy. However, as McLean states, 'the artefacts of literacy that go with houses...are not building up'. People cannot say:

...here's my phone bill, here's my rent, that's my letter box and that's my cheque book and that's where I store it all, and this is where I keep my calendar and diary to keep it all organized...If you have increased control over your personal environment then your capacity to be an agent in the literacy experience is enhanced. That's a really big problem socially as there is nothing in the Ngaanyatjarra environment that empowers you to do that. Nothing...The chaos factor...no order...literacy is intermeshed with these aspects of the environment, housing, lifestyle, the expectation of literacy post-school, the formation of the supports to allow literacy to happen outside of school are inextricably linked to the social factors that allow literacy to happen, like storage, possessions, property. It's not just knowing how to do it. The isolated, solitary activity of reading a newspaper is chipped away at, not allowed to take place which is what newspaper reading or whatever is all about. All the aspects that literacy is hinged on are at war with the Ngaanyatjarra social reality, in so many ways it works against literacy.⁸⁴⁸

Many aspects of Ngaanyatjarra cultural practice militate against the social capacity to control the domestic space in order to enact literate modes. 'Demand sharing', for instance, places pressure on the social capacity of individual Ngaanyatjarra to conserve cash or food and to regulate the removal and storage of property.⁸⁴⁹ In a social environment that privileges generosity and sharing and where children are not socialised into time and space rule-oriented boundaries, the ability to control private space and personal possessions is hard to achieve. As Mick explains:

They break it all up when you have books and something like that...these kids here, when they go, they rip it all up...I lock all my spanners up inside. Spanners and screwdrivers, and wheel spanners and jacks. Put it all inside so people don't touch it, tyre and all. If you leave it in the back somebody come along and steal it, take off with it, they won't bring it back.

Veronica tries keeping a notepad and phone numbers in a bag or cupboard but 'kids get it quick'. 'I keep some books home', says Una, 'but all blown away, strong wind came and blew it away':

I used to sit down and read and sometimes write down what I read from the Bible. I write it down sometimes, then I put in a safe place, but it's all gone. Like my grandchildren comes, they must think: 'Oh my nanna must have left something there'. They'll go through it and throw all the paper away, like a little note what we write it down...they just grab it and threw it away.

Una also uses a bag to store papers, but needs a place 'safe from the kids opening it and going through the bag'. Jacinta buys magazines from the store:

...but someone always come and steal them, must be some people from like store, bought a new one yesterday and it's gone, someone took it. I don't have any books. I'd love to have a books, but

⁸⁴⁷ (Hamilton 1979: 111–13). See also (Austin-Broos 2003; Myers 1988).

⁸⁴⁸ McLean—Interview 9/9/04.

⁸⁴⁹ Demand sharing in Aboriginal Australia has been explored in the literature: (Austin-Broos 2003; Folds 2001; Musharbash 2003; Myers 1988; Peterson 1993; Sansom 1994 [1988]; Schwab 1995).

people always come in there and take it. I'd like to keep it in my room, locked up. I got a lot of photos there, keep it in little basket, I keep it inside.

Jennifer tries keeping books at home:

I keep it, but kids chucked it all out. You know, muck around and all that. Always keep my things private but they just go in there, chuck it away, make mess...I took some things to the house and I went to town and came back and I seen the things all over, just lying there...Must get a big cupboard or something with a lock.

Now her strategy is to store personal papers at the college:

That way I can get it whenever I need it if anybody come and ask me I just go there and grab it. They might ask me: 'Have you been doing this and that?' and I take them to the college if they ask me.

Mobility and iterative relocations of domestic space are further factors that impede home literacy practice, as evident during 'sorry business'. After a relative passes away families shift to a 'sorry camp' in their own, or a more distant, community—taking bedding and essential possessions—often leaving houses abandoned for months. After the funeral business is over a family may move to a new house to avoid memories of the deceased.

Ultimately, such conditions make the storage of literacy artefacts a challenging task and impact on home reading and writing practices.

Home reading

Unlike many Western homes, houses are not 'print rich environments' and people are not in the habit of accumulating texts in their camps.⁸⁵⁰ Money, keycards, bank details and phone numbers are carried by men in wallets or business card files, while women tend to use purses, shoulder bags or bras. Letters, address books and personal papers are stored on high shelves, in handbags, suitcases, overnight bags and pillow slips. In most houses there is little privacy and activity tends to be communal and public. Functional home reading (food or medication labels or home appliance manuals) is rare when function can be figured out by intuitive familiarity, oral instruction or 'reading' graphic symbols.

Magazines, letters and children's school work rapidly become obsolete and are discarded, and perhaps picked up by the next opportune reader, or raked up and burnt as rubbish.

Eileen tells me:

I read magazines, any books, Christian books, I can read a little bit of Ngaanyatjarra, any books laying round, keep them at home, get magazines from shop. I read those books, and other books I got found laying on the ground.

⁸⁵⁰ (Heath 1982bHeath, 1983 #196).

There are specific texts, however, which are kept over many years: photograph albums, Bibles, Hymn books, the *Ngaanyatjarra Dictionary* (kept for its emblematic value), and texts that fall into the category of 'sociohistorical reading'.⁸⁵¹ Clifford (Family J) is known as a reader, he is one of the few men who buys magazines with 'find-a-word' puzzles. He and his wife Kayleen keep texts in their bedroom: 'newspapers in a basket, books, magazines and them other books'. Kayleen explains:

I've got that big book at home about all the Aboriginal people from the long time ago. You know *Drop in the bucket*. I read that every night, Mt Margaret stories, about girls been run away. That one, mission one, blue one, little red Bible.⁸⁵²

Clifford learns his family history by reading 'about those people down around Laverton way, who got sent away down south...my grandmother was a little baby in that story'. April is another avid reader: 'I had that book, that *Drop in the bucket*, read all that...I got a cupboard there and I got all the books there'. Another old man tells me he reads history books: 'like that by Len Beadell'.⁸⁵³ Others also read to seek information, as Arthur describes:

I had a couple of books about different sorts of Aboriginal way of living. I had that one and I used to read that. That was a really good one. You know, if I might go into another place up this way, north way, well I had to read that book to know, if I'm up there I got to be careful, you know. If I'm out here, I do the same, Amata way. It's only a book you know, might be whitefellas book that one, but it's really good to read...lend it to someone and it never come back.

Silas reads to expand his knowledge of the world: 'I read history stories...sometimes I read *National Geographic*, learning about other people on the other side of the world'. Mick reads 'to learn music' and borrows guitar tuition books to learn at home. On one occasion George wants something to read on the plane and borrows my Shakespeare. He tells me: 'I know about him, he was a poet, I watched a programme on TV about him yesterday'. Others, like Kenny, read 'anything':

I keep reading like book, anything, paper. I get some from the office, like newspapers. Then get a magazine in the store, *That's Life*, *True Stories* and all that...reading like signs...like next place, next town, read all them names. Keep reading like that...I read anywhere, college, or if someone's got a book. Get newspapers from office and take them home, look at it over and over, try and get another book and chuck that one away...It's just the way I do it.

Newspapers are accessed in the community office or staff homes and read for the news, the AFL scores, to find cars to buy, or 'just to see who is in prison'.⁸⁵⁴ 'Oh I read anything' echoes Arthur, 'I pick up a song book in language, another paper there, Bible I got there,

⁸⁵¹ (Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines 1988: 172).

⁸⁵² See Chapter 2 f.n. 26 for the story of 'Clifford's' grandmother who was one in the group that ran away from Moore River Settlement in 1921. *Drop in the bucket* refers to the story of Mt Margaret Mission (Morgan 1986), 'mission one, blue one' refers to the mission exhibition catalogue (Plant and Viegas 2002) and the 'little red Bible' is the English Good News Bible.

⁸⁵³ (Beadell 1967), see Chapter 3 f.n. 80.

⁸⁵⁴ Newspapers include: *The Kalgoorlie Miner*, *Quokka* and the *West Australian*.

another book...letters, that police commission sends it here for me, like I lost a number plate, well I'm in trouble'.

Home prayer meetings are a site for 'public' or communal reading events, but individual silent reading is a rare sight. Finding locations for silent reading is difficult. In this highly social world Adina only reads 'at night when people go sleep'. Eileen tries reading alone at home, Christian stories or a *Mills and Boon* from the store, but it is too noisy. At my house she finds a place to read quietly and also borrows books, magazines and pens. While reading she likes to find new words and write them down to learn and understand 'more harder words in English'. The college library provides a site for solo reading.⁸⁵⁵ Here adults also use computers, prepare funeral texts, type hymns and songs, play computer games and watch videos without 'whitefella gatekeeping':

'Jim' would come into the library and there was one particular book where he would come in for several hours, for several weeks and he would read this book...turning the pages slowly, but he was very interested in this book because it was all about Wiluna and how the Ngaanyatjarra people were elected to the Wiluna Shire.⁸⁵⁶

Leah's favourite books in the library are: 'the story one, comedy stories and real life and movie story, good stories, some of the words it's hard when you read, the long writing'.

Home writing

Eileen discusses the difficulty of accessing or purchasing the material artefacts required for letter writing. She also suggests that letter-writing might cause her husband to become jealous so desists for this socially compelling reason:

Sometimes get little bit writing, forgot little bit...Sometimes write it on the pad, writing letters I like, but I got no chance to do that, [he] might think writing letters to boyfriend. Can't get stamps and envelope, try to get it but people might think writing to boyfriend, get jealous and talk about it.

Notes and messages are superfluous when information is mostly communicated orally. Some contexts do, however, warrant 'memory aids' and PIN or phone numbers are scribbled on scraps of paper or cardboard but easily lost, whereas phone numbers scrawled on walls or by public phones act as a permanent mnemonic.⁸⁵⁷ Arthur writes orders for car parts and Mick copies engine identification details:

Something wrong, you write it down, because it's got a thing there, name on the side of the thing, whatever is broken you just get that name off that...on the car thing there, it's got a thing there, numbers, for the car, what model is it. Get all the details off that and take it to the garage. That garage man, he have a look and if it the right thing, he give it to you.

⁸⁵⁵ Resources were provided by the WA State Library service. It has been shown that libraries offer important sites for family and community literacy and 'lifelong learning' in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory (NT Libraries and Knowledge Centres 2005) and other fourth world Indigenous contexts (Crockatt and Smythe).

⁸⁵⁶ Paget—Interview 22/5/04.

⁸⁵⁷ (Heath 1983; Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines 1988).

Una's brother is deaf and although she uses sign language to communicate, writing is an alternative modality:

My brother, he's a deaf man, he comes back and he wants to know what things been happening here. So I have a pad and a pen and I write it down to him and show him...I write words down for him in English, and Ngaanyatjarra...we have to help him by writing it down for him and showing it...I write lots and lots of little notes for him so he can see. Because we get sorry by using our fingers, I get tired and he keep on asking...I write little notes down for him so he can understand...I don't write much, you know, only when my brother comes.

Lucille also communicates non-verbally using only sign language, gesture and note-writing. She reveals, in a note written to me, that she also writes stories in a book at home. Song-writing is also a home writing practice. Older people write *turlku* ('hymns') in English, Ngaanyatjarra or Pitjantjatjara (Fig. 5.1). Arthur has 'only been writing song, like translating from the English into language, like I can write a couple of *turlku*...if it's a English song, well I write it into Ngaanyatjarra'. Younger men in bands also compose songs, although these are usually memorised. Gavan and his wife sometimes write songs together; they buy paper from the store and as he plays the song on his guitar, they write the chords and words in English and keep the songs in a bag at home. Songs like 'Wiluna' and 'City Lights' are later performed by Gavan and the band.

To summarise, for most people, finding cultural acceptance of autonomous home reading practices is difficult and writing, is less common than reading. Additionally, private reading—and writing—demand a domestic space conducive to isolation and quiet and the social capacity to 'cut off', as well as spatial conditions: a chair, good lighting, warm in winter and cool in summer and access to resources.

Literacy resources

As Barton and Hamilton posit, opportunities for literacy are 'provided by the range of resources available to people'.⁸⁵⁸ Ngaanyatjarra people note that until recently reading and writing resources could not be purchased in Warburton. So literacy resources came mainly from staff or missionaries (who continue to supply Christian texts, readers, comics, gospel song tapes, children's colouring-in packs and stories). Resources are now available at the local community store, unlike in some other Aboriginal communities, although stationery items, stamps, envelopes and reading glasses are still difficult to obtain (Fig. 5.2).⁸⁵⁹

⁸⁵⁸ (Barton and Hamilton 1998: 191).

⁸⁵⁹ The capacity to buy and store literacy artefacts as a factor inhibiting literacy in remote communities is noted in other studies (Bat 2005; Kral and Ward 2000; Kral and Falk 2004).

Fig. 5.1 Writing *turku*

There's a healing water flow throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Land
Throughout the rugged country
Across Ngaanyatjarra Land flowing for the people, people everywhere.
There's healing water flow throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Land

Chorus:
Let it flow across the rugged country across this Great Southern Land.
Let it flow across the rugged country.
Let the healing water's flow for and me

Let the healing water's flow
Throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Land throughout this rugged country.
Across the Ngaanyatjarra Land flowing for the people, people
Everywhere there's a healing water flow throughout the Ngaanyatjarra Land.

nyutupar
Ka Pokatja wiyangarany
2) nganampa mayatja nyutunya
Kinga pulkanya wikkumayatja
nyutupanya wakapanyinya
titutjara wangka nyinatjaka
nganampa mayatja
wikkumayatja

Mayatja Altimani Mununi Minala Ngayulu
Patani Nyuntumpa Mayatjaku.

Jesu-nya Marakatinyi Anangu Winkiku.

Nyuntu Ngali Kulila Ngura Ilkaritji Jesu-nya
Patani Nyuntumpa Ngalimpa.

Jesu-nya Marakatinyi Anangu Winki-ku.

Tjitu-nyanga Ilaringu Nyuntumpa Ngalimpa
Nyuntu Ngali Kulila Ngura Ilkiaritji.

Jesu-nya Marakatinyi Angu Winki-ku.

Nyuntu Ngali Malarinyu Watarku Nyira.
Nyakula Patani
Nganalu Katitjaku.

Jesu-nya Marakatinyi Anangu Winki-ku.

Fig. 5.2 Literacy resources available at Warburton local store 2004

Mills and Boon books - \$6.00 / \$12.00
Photo albums - \$3.50 / \$10.00
Scripture in Songbook (English) - \$25.00
Turlku Pirninya (Ngaanyatjarra Hymn Book) - \$12.00
Mama Kuurku Wangka Marlangkatjanya: The New Testament in Ngaanyatjarra and English \$25.00
Magazines: New Idea, Women's Weekly, Woman's Day, Take 5, That's Life, Starhunt.
Memo books - \$1.00
Writing pad - \$2.50
Scrapbooks - \$2.00
Pens - \$1.00
Pencils - 50c
Coloured crayon/textas \$6.50
Children's story books - \$2.00
Cards - birthday - \$1.80 / \$1.50
CDs – approx. \$30
Videos – approx. \$30 - \$40
Toys – some 'educational' (e.g. toy lap top computers - \$40.00)

Women's magazines and magazines with 'find-a-word' puzzles are bought at the store, mainly by women, and sell out fast.⁸⁶⁰ Molly buys a 'lot of books, nowadays still, I like reading, anything, any news, I buy *Take 5*, *That's Life*, *Woman's Variety*, *New Idea* and all that'. Naomi buys 'a lot of magazines every week from the shop, *That's Life* and *Take 5* because they've got the good stories...sometimes I do the crosswords'. When people buy the 'word puzzle' or 'crossword' magazines they also buy a pen, as few homes have pens or pencils. 'Find-a-words' are a popular pattern recognition activity where low level literates demonstrate 'literacy-like' behaviour by matching letter shapes rather than using alphabetical knowledge. The popularity of magazines and newsletters is apparent (especially those locally-produced with photos of friends or kin).⁸⁶¹ In the store, goods are priced to the nearest dollar or 50c to make it easier for 'innumerate' shoppers. People often shop using brand loyalty and 'a strong sense of visual imagery'.⁸⁶² Shopping lists are never made and, despite the dire financial situation of most families, budgeting is uncommon. Items are piled into trolleys, with scant estimation of total cost, and expensive items are commonly discarded at the check-out. In this environment non-Aboriginal expectation of Aboriginal literacy and numeracy competence is low, for instance, although the store stocked the recently published *Ngaanyatjarra Picture Dictionary*, a storekeeper explained to me that there was 'not much point, locals can't read it'.

Literacy in the public space

Literacy in the public space is commonly enacted against a background of normative definitions of literacy and expectations of competence. Non-Aboriginal people often have preconceptions about Aboriginal illiteracy and have been heard to make comments such as 'they are very primitive, they don't know how to write their name', 'some don't even know their date of birth' or 'they go to school, then can't fill in forms'. In the next section I draw together evidence-based findings from adult literacy assessments to underpin the discussion on elements that support or constrain visible literacy practices in the public space.

An assessment of adult literacy

In 2004 I assisted Ngaanyatjarra Council to conduct a skills audit of adult CDEP recipients across the Ngaanyatjarra Lands and I was given permission to use data from 527 interviews. This represents approximately one-third of the 1500-odd adult population (aged

⁸⁶⁰ Studies that include data on Aboriginal reading practices are rare. An exception is Marika Moisseeff's discussion on reading preferences in a study of an Aboriginal community in South Australia (Moisseeff 1999).

⁸⁶¹ Magazines include: *Never Give Up News*, *Minymaku News*, *Ngaanyatjarra News*, *Marnla*, and *The Family Magazine: Today*.

⁸⁶² (Heath 1983: 192).

16–65) resident in the Lands.⁸⁶³ Assessments of English language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) competence were conducted using the *National Reporting System* (NRS).⁸⁶⁴ Examples of written texts assessed at NRS 1, NRS 2 and NRS 3 and the NRS descriptors can be found in Appendix H. This data provides a rare quantitative perspective on adult English LLN in a remote context—the problematic nature of measuring literacy competence notwithstanding.⁸⁶⁵

Data are sorted into the three generations of interviewees who have been through school.⁸⁶⁶ Interviewees were firstly asked to self-assess their literacy competence in English and their Indigenous mother tongue (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 2004 CDEP Skills Audit—Literacy self-assessment

Can you read and write?	<i>ENGLISH</i>		<i>VERNACULAR</i>	
	Warburton	Ngaanyatjarra Lands	Warburton	Ngaanyatjarra Lands
Nothing / A little	117 (74.1%)	415 (78.9%)	141 (91%)	465 (80.9%)
A lot	41 (25.9%)	111 (21.1%)	14 (9.0%)	47 (9.1%)
Not stated	1	1	4	15
Total:	159	527	159	527

Findings indicate that more people self-define as having literacy competence in English rather than the vernacular. In Warburton around 25% of adults perceive that they can read and write ‘a lot’ in English, with a slightly lower figure for the Ngaanyatjarra Lands as a whole. The conflation of reading and writing is ambiguous as it disguises the fact that people often have better reading than writing skills.

In Table 5.2 the overall NRS level has been rounded ‘down’ bringing the combined reading, writing and numeracy levels to a median level.

⁸⁶³ (Ngaanyatjarra Health Service 2003).

⁸⁶⁴ (Coates et al. 1995). The National Reporting System is a nationally recognised ‘mechanism’ for reporting outcomes of adult English language, literacy and numeracy programmes. The NRS data provides rough approximations of NRS levels only. The category ‘NRS 1 and below’ includes those assessed *Not Yet Competent* and assessments at NRS 1 (i.e. able to read and write key words and simple sentences, employ number recognition and basic numerical concepts). The category ‘NRS 2 and above’ indicates a ‘functional’ level of literacy competence and includes assessments at NRS 2 (i.e. approximately equivalent to upper primary and beginning secondary skill level) and NRS 3 (i.e. approximately equivalent to a lower secondary skill level).

⁸⁶⁵ See (Christie et al. 1993; Levine 1998; Wickert 1989). In an earlier study (Kral 1997) at Ngaanyatjarra Community College, Warburton I assessed 82 adults aged between 17–60 against the Interim Literacy Course Matrix (ILCM). The overall assessments against the ILCM indicated 21% at Pre-Level 1; 34% at Level 1; 29% at Level 2; 16% at Level 3. These scales are equivalent to levels used in the *Certificate of General Education for Adults*.

⁸⁶⁶ Of the 527 interviewees, 521 (98.9%) claim to have been to school (although the duration of schooling was not noted). Only six adults (1.1%) claim to have had no schooling at all, a rather remarkable figure compared with other data

Table 5.2 2004 CDEP Skills Audit—Overall NRS (Ngaanyatjarra Lands)

	<i>Young (15–25 yrs)</i>		<i>Middle (26–40 yrs)</i>		<i>Old (41–61 yrs)</i>	
	Government schooling in communities (1984–1993)		Government school at Warburton plus secondary hostels (1969–1983)		End of mission schooling and beginning of secondary hostels (1948–1968)	
NRS 1 and below	157	84%	180	86%	105	81.0%
NRS 2 and above	30	16%	29	14%	24	19%
Total no. 527	187	100%	209	100%	129	100%

Table 5.3 is sorted into NRS *reading* assessments only. Reading competence was found to be higher than writing competence. The reading data approximates with interviewees' own perception of their literacy competence as noted in Table 5.1 (i.e. equivalence between 'NRS 2 and above' and 'a lot')—suggesting that the discrepancy between perceived and actual competence is minimal and most adults have a realistic sense of what 'literacy' entails.⁸⁶⁷ It also mirrors the ethnographic data indicating that people read more than they write.

Table 5.3 2004 CDEP Skills Audit— NRS Reading (Ngaanyatjarra Lands)

	<i>Young (16–25 yrs)</i>		<i>Middle (26–40 yrs)</i>		<i>Old (41–61 yrs)</i>	
	Government schooling in communities (1984–1993)		Government school at Warburton plus secondary hostels (1969–1983)		End of mission schooling and beginning of secondary hostels (1948–1968)	
NRS 1 and below	145	77.5%	168	80.4%	97	75.2%
NRS 2 and above	42	22.5%	41	19.6%	32	24.8%
Total no. 527	187	100%	209	100%	129	100%

To summarise, the sample represents approximately one-third of the adult population of the Lands (i.e. those who are CDEP participants) so statements based on the findings cannot be attributed to the whole adult population. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that English LLN competence is approximately equivalent across the three generational cohorts, irrespective of schooling experience. The middle-aged generation appears to have the lowest level of competence, perhaps indicative of the ravaging effect of alcohol and petrol sniffing in the 1970s–1980s. Incidentally, many in this generation who were serious petrol sniffers when they were younger have suffered learning damage. A substantial number in this cohort claim to have 'forgotten' their reading and writing: 'I can't remember anything now, too much sniffing', said one man, and 'I never do that reading and writing, I lost my mind for that' said another. Moreover, the data show that the proficiency of young adults is approximately commensurate with their elders. This suggests that older adults do

from Central Australia (Hoogenraad 2001; Kral and Falk 2004). This group includes three middle aged women from Kiwirkura, who are from the last group to come out of the desert in 1984.

⁸⁶⁷ This contrasts with findings in other remote settings in the Northern Territory (Kral and Schwab 2003) where a greater discrepancy is found between perceived and assessed competence, indicating that in other remote locations Aboriginal people may have less insight into what being literate actually means.

not appear to have attained a higher level of literacy competence, despite anecdotal evidence to the contrary.

Finally, the data indicates that approximately 75%–80% of CDEP participants, irrespective of age, have an assessed English LLN competence at NRS 1 or below (i.e. ranging from non-literate to having basic literacy). The findings also tell us that some 20%–25% of adults have prerequisite English LLN proficiency for entry level competence for VET courses at *Certificate III* level and jobs requiring literacy.⁸⁶⁸

NRS assessments of young adult CDEP participants at Warburton (Table 5.4) indicate that English LLN competence in this sub-group is marginally higher. Approximately one-third are non-literate, one-third has basic literacy skills and one-third have entry level competence for VET courses at *Certificate III* level. The higher levels may be indicative of assessor reliability or the fact that more Warburton families have a longer connection with the mission and consequently a longer span for intergenerational literacy transmission to become evident.

Table 5.4 2004 CDEP Skills Audit—Overall NRS young adults (Warburton)

	<i>Young adults (16–25 yrs)</i>			
	NRS Reading only		NRS Overall	
NRS 1 NYC	16	28%	21	37%
NRS 1 C	22	39%	19	33%
NRS 2 C	19	33%	17	30%
Total no:	57	100%	57	100%

Hence, by drawing on the data, I suggest that adults can be divided into three categories of English literates: a top layer of approximately 20%–30% whom I call the visible literates (assessed at NRS 2 and above) whose public roles and identities are intertwined with literacy; an intermediate layer (some 30%), the less visible literates who may use literacy privately for personal purposes; and the final third of the adult population, the non-literates, who have little need for literacy in everyday life.

Such assessments must, however, be viewed from a wider perspective on literacy development (see Chapter 1). My argument is that the Ngaanyatjarra literacy context cannot be compared in any simple way with the mainstream. The Ngaanyatjarra and Ngaatjatjarra have only been participating in schooling for between two to four

generations, oral English has been acquired in tandem with technical literacy skills, and there have been relatively few meaningful arenas for adult literacy use. I suggest that the above findings are predictable given the circumstances of literacy learning and use. By mainstream standards they may appear low, but this cannot be an indicator of 'failure' or 'deficit', as the situation could have not been otherwise. Hence it can be concluded that a tension exists between the policy-makers and educators who seek commensurability with mainstream literacy benchmarks, and the lived reality of the Ngaanyatjarra and other remote Aboriginal groups. At this juncture it is worth emphasising the irony that in mainstream Australia universal literacy has not yet been achieved either.⁸⁶⁹ Thus the moral panic around remote Aboriginal 'illiteracy' is perhaps more indicative of the power of what Graff terms the 'literacy myth'.

Literacy strategies—the vernacular and English

Following on from this, data on vernacular literacy competence is minimal. Jan Mountney estimates that about 8% of adults can read Ngaanyatjarra, including a few older men who learned Ngaanyatjarra reading only and this approximates with the self-assessments above (Table 5.1).⁸⁷⁰ Her estimates also correlate with the subjective data compiled by Glass and Hackett in 2004 (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5 Estimated Ngaanyatjarra and English adult literacy competence

Illiterate	95	9.3%
Semi-literate in English	545	53.7%
Literate in English only	108	10.6%
Literate in Ngaanyatjarra only	11	1.1%
Literate in Ngaanyatjarra and English	90	8.9%
Literate in Ngaanyatjarra and semi-literate in English	64	6.3%
Total literate in Ngaanyatjarra	165	16.2%
Total literate in English	198	19.5%

1015 Ngaanyatjarra speaking adults aged 15 plus.
Source: Glass and Hackett pers. comm. 2004

Mountney suggests that for some adults, 'public reading' in the vernacular *is* reading. By 'public reading' she means reading a 'chunk of text', often Ngaanyatjarra Scripture, out

⁸⁶⁸ Based on data gathered in the *Language, Literacy and Numeracy Guide for the Certificate III in Aboriginal Health Work (Clinical)* (Human Services Training Advisory Council 2001) it is asserted (Kral and Falk 2004) that courses at *Certificate III* level require competence in English language, literacy and numeracy at Level 2 in the NRS (Coates et al. 1995).

⁸⁶⁹ See (Graff 1979; Graff 1987; Graff 1994 [1982]).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics *Survey of Aspects of Literacy* conducted in 1996 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997; Skinner 1997) found that in 'prose literacy' (i.e. the ability to understand and use information from various kinds of prose texts including newspapers, magazines and brochures) among Australian adults aged 15–74:

19.7% have very poor skills, likely to have considerable difficulties dealing with printed materials in everyday life.

27.5% have some difficulty with printed materials in everyday life.

35.3% able to cope with a varied range of materials found in daily life and at work.

15.5% have good literacy skills and able to use higher order skills associated with matching and integrating information and performing arithmetic operations.

2.0% have very good literacy skills, able to make high level inferences, use complex displays of information, process information and perform multiple operations sequentially.

⁸⁷⁰ Mountney—Interview 3/3/04.

loud in a group—a form of oral decoding where the reader may not fully comprehend the text, but can decode ‘quite well’. She estimates that maybe 100 adults in the 40-plus age group are doing public reading to varying degrees of proficiency, but only about 20 adults are able to read and understand the Ngaanyatjarra *New Testament* independently. Public reading may originate from the early practice of memorising and reciting Scripture or rote learning catechism and in this context those who are less literate can still enact literate behaviours. Examples can be found of non-literate adults memorising chunks of Biblical text so well that their imitative reading practices convince observers.⁸⁷¹

From her experience teaching vernacular literacy Dorothy Hackett observes that full texts are rarely read beyond the headlines or following long texts to seek coherence or cohesion. Glass and Hackett distinguish between two types of Ngaanyatjarra readers. In one group are ‘global’ readers, who read in ‘chunks’ and for meaning using word-recognition skills. They get a picture of words or phrases and fit them into a predictive text schema. In another group are those who are ‘analytical’, that is, they use word attack skills and segment parts of speech and affixes and are developing a metalinguistic awareness.⁸⁷² Hackett still visits camps to teach Ngaanyatjarra literacy to young adults whom she knows, and as she taught many of their parents and grandparents to read Ngaanyatjarra, they readily engage with her.⁸⁷³ As Dawn’s daughter Leah explains:

I do thing, language at home. That lady, she go round every afternoon learning more language...keep the language going...writing and spelling and all that. It’s important because if you don’t do that language, well all the young people they might grow up and they don’t know how to write and spell in their language. That’s why...might be the young people take over.

Significantly, Hackett finds that many young adults have sufficient English literacy to rapidly become proficient in Ngaanyatjarra, yet lack many taken for granted literacy skills:

I teach a lot of people, including younger people, to read the Ngaanyatjarra *New Testament* and even if they can read English, I’m doing transfer skills, and even if they can only read a little bit I take them through the four Readers and then I teach them to use the Ngaanyatjarra *New Testament*. I have to teach them lots of skills, I have to teach them that the Chapters they’ll find at the top of the page, and the numbers in the text are the verse numbers. And I have to teach them that there is connected text *over* the page, so I have to teach them to read over the page and another skill they need to know is that if you are reading on one side and you turn the page over you don’t read on the opposite page, you read at the back of that page. I also teach, people like ‘Lucy’, I taught her about quote marks yesterday because she was obviously reading something as quoted past the end of the quote marks.⁸⁷⁴

Others also notice that ‘reading’ may mean skimming the headlines, pictures and captions under the photos, a tendency criticised by older literates like April:

⁸⁷¹ Glass and Hackett—Interview 8/5/04. See also *United Aborigines Messenger* September 1976; *United Aborigines Messenger* November 1979.

⁸⁷² Glass and Hackett—Interview 8/5/04.

⁸⁷³ (Hackett 1998).

I never seen them sitting down with a book, they just like looking at pictures, they don't read it. Not only them but I have problems with my children, my daughter, she doesn't know how to read, she always ask me...but my oldest one she's good, she know how to read and write.

Literacy domains

As indicated earlier, the more visible Ngaanyatjarra literates tend to be those who participate in the institutional arenas of work, church and community governance. The less literate tend to be on the periphery of the institutional domains where the artefacts of literacy (pens, paper, computers, photocopiers, faxes) can be accessed. By drawing on the proposition that 'different literacies are associated with different domains of life', I now focus on the visible literacies enacted in the public space during training, employment, governance and community participation.⁸⁷⁵ It is in these public domains that adults tend to be measured against the standards of the 'dominant literacies'.⁸⁷⁶

Literacy for training

Adults in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands have been participating in health and education 'vocational' training only since the mid-1980s and in 1996 Ngaanyatjarra Community College opened in Warburton as a Registered Training Organisation.⁸⁷⁷ This has been a short time for them to imbibe the culture of formal training. Accredited training has taken place mostly at *Certificate I, II and III* level, however few full certificates have been completed (see Appendix I).⁸⁷⁸ Mainstream credentialing—delayed gratification for a future employment reward—is not perceived as a prerequisite for a fulfilling life by most Ngaanyatjarra. No adults have attained the academic preparation to undertake tertiary courses and even VET study generally requires mediated English literacy support.⁸⁷⁹ Moreover, writers assert that the academic English literacy skills of the majority of secondary students in the Western Desert are not commensurate with their mainstream peers.⁸⁸⁰ It can be argued that in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands an increasing orientation towards 'VET in Schools' and 'Aboriginal School Based Traineeships' is exacerbating adolescents not developing the high order English 'academic-literate discourses' required for senior and post-secondary study.⁸⁸¹

⁸⁷⁴ Glass and Hackett—Interview 8/5/04.

⁸⁷⁵ (Barton and Hamilton 1998: 7).

⁸⁷⁶ (Barton and Hamilton 1998).

⁸⁷⁷ See Appendix 1—Table AI.1: The 2004 CDEP Skills Audit data indicates that of the 159 CDEP recipients interviewed at Warburton 57% claim to have done some form of training and 43% claim to have done no training at all. The data indicates that over the life span older adults have accumulated more training experience than younger adults.

⁸⁷⁸ See Appendix 1—Table AI.2 for data on module and certificate completions at Ngaanyatjarra Community College 2000-2003.

⁸⁷⁹ (NLLIA 1996).

⁸⁸⁰ See (NLLIA 1996).

⁸⁸¹ (Rose et al. 1998). See (Education Department of Western Australia 1999).

<http://www.apprenticeships.training.wa.gov.au/asbt/>

The low certificate completion rates have been attributed to the fact that most Training Packages do not fit the context:

We try to put competencies together that fit the community group and we find that part of one competency fits, but not the whole thing. There are parts of a number of competencies that people need, but they don't need the other things or can't fulfill the requirements of the competency because of their situation...English language literacy and numeracy is an element, but not the only one.⁸⁸²

The provision of accredited training is linked to an assumption that once trained the skills will be used in a workplace, yet some trainers suggest that there is insufficient work under CDEP for all the people who receive training, although training in 'office skills', 'childcare' and 'essential services' has led to CDEP work.⁸⁸³ Workers in health, environmental health, land management and education undertake accredited training. Jennifer is an AIEO at the school and started teacher training by correspondence at *Certificate III* level:

I was doing some computers jobs and typing, typewriters, computers, but I always ask them any of the hard words when they talk to me and when it's on the some paper...I always ask them: 'What's this word? Can you just make it a bit easier for me so I can understand.' I always tell them if they give a big paper to me...this is a strange word I always tell them and point to that word: 'What's this word here?' And they always tell me and I know. I don't get shamed to ask. I always tell them: 'What's this?' because I want to get learn more.

Mountney runs Ngaanyatjarra literacy workshops for AIEOs who teach LOTE classes:

Adults who are training in vocational courses tend to do all their written work in class. AIEOs read Ngaanyatjarra materials that they need to read, some of them are reading a limited amount of English stuff to do with teaching practices and their writing is fairly limited...people who have taken on study programmes...read lecture notes and try to write assignments, but because they've had very limited practice with that, it's very difficult.⁸⁸⁴

Notably, language teaching workshops provide an unusual opportunity for concentrated reading and writing in English and the vernacular. Jennifer notes that 'we only do it in the workshop' as the home environment militates against the social capacity for trainees to study. In workshops adults have an opportunity to draft and redraft Ngaanyatjarra texts, gain an understanding of the differences between spoken and written text, develop reading out loud skills and school-like question and answer routines around written text.

⁸⁸² Interview—Trainer 15/2/04.

⁸⁸³ It is assumed that VET is about training to work transitions or upgrading skills for workers, however in remote areas VET needs to relate more concretely to the conditions presented, as employment opportunities in remote settings are severely limited with CDEP the only avenue for expansion in employment opportunities (Gelade and Stehlik 2004). The NCVET National VET survey found that in remote areas reasons other than employment, including the community-related benefits, are more important as motivators for training (NCVER 2004). Other research has found that the link between education and employment is not self-evident in many Indigenous communities (Hunter and Schwab 1998) where successfully gaining employment in CDEP is not based on education (Taylor and Hunter 2001). Nevertheless, the Federal Government is initiating a raft of 'one-size-fits-all' youth-oriented school to work transition initiatives (*Working Together for Indigenous Youth – A National Framework* <http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/A949033865E84811B4DA423369850315/1100/NationalFramework.pdf>) that don't necessarily fit the particularities of remote Aboriginal community contexts (Mellor and Corrigan 2004).

⁸⁸⁴ Mountney—Interview 3/3/04.

Literacy for work

Employment in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands is CDEP and from a Ngaanyatjarra perspective CDEP is 'working for your living'.⁸⁸⁵ A few salaried positions do exist, however the formal written application process is often beyond the English literacy competence of most adults, so in effect literacy plays a 'gatekeeping role' by acting as a barrier to employment.⁸⁸⁶ The majority of CDEP positions do not require significant literacy competence (see Appendix J). Literacy may only be needed for filling in timesheets or signing names for CDEP wages. Certain workplaces support workers with low literacy by generating simplified 'plain English' texts and systems. For instance, simplified surveys for documenting flora and fauna, and an icon-based GPS recording system have been developed for Land Management fieldworkers. Likewise, a simplified checklist for determining household environmental health needs has been implemented for Environmental Health Workers. Some work literacies are displayed in Fig. 5.3.

Some CDEP jobs, for instance in the office, playgroup, school and college require varying degrees of literacy and numeracy competence. In these locations workers acquire the 'written language rituals' of the workplace and through repeated practice these become taken for granted habits.⁸⁸⁷ Few contexts require literacy skills such as alphabetical recognition, ordering or retrieval skills, and dictionaries are rarely used. Office workers have perhaps the most consistent need to use a literate system of information organisation. Kayleen works in the community office:

Count moneys. Do the pays for people in Warburton, in Patjarr and Kanpa. Add them up, put the money in payslips. Anthony helps, do it together....Giving cheques out, writing order for people and send their money away to other places when people ring for their money like in Kalgoorlie. People ring for their money and we send it, write it down and send it...on a order book.

She writes, sends and receives office faxes and uses the computer: 'do it by myself, use the password and open it and do work in the computer'. When I ask how she learned the skills for the job, she answers: 'I don't know, learn self' indicating the subtle way in which she has been mentored by a staff member through a process of informal training and 'intent participation'.⁸⁸⁸ Kayleen is now the certified Centrelink Agent in the office.

⁸⁸⁵ In Warburton CDEP jobs include rubbish collection, garden maintenance, collecting firewood, cleaning, and work at the brickworks, land management, college, school, clinic, cultural centre, arts project, women's centre and play group. Current public discourse is construing CDEP as contributing to welfare dependency (Pearson 2000; Spicer 1997). Other writers suggest that CDEP hides the real unemployment figures and that without CDEP Indigenous unemployment and welfare dependency would increase dramatically (Altman and Gray 2000; Altman et al. 2005)}.

⁸⁸⁶ See (Ivanic and Hamilton 1990; Levine 1986; Taylor 1997).

⁸⁸⁷ (Halliday 1985: 93).

⁸⁸⁸ (Rogoff et al. 2003).

Maisie runs the community playgroup with other local women and, with mediated non-Aboriginal assistance, trains playgroup workers and writes workshop reports.⁸⁸⁹ The Ngaanyatjarra workers have created a semi-structured learning environment suffused with literate elements. Walls are covered with commercial English number and alphabet charts alongside handwritten posters in English explicating daily routines: story-book reading, picture talk and songs and rhymes in English and Ngaanyatjarra. The workers write daily programmes, weekly timetables and shopping lists in English. Naomi works with Ngaanyatjarra Media and operates the community radio station at the college. She writes notices and reads community announcements over the radio: 'somebody might send a fax to me to read it in Ngaanyatjarra...I say it in English, then Ngaanyatjarra, do it both ways':

Sometimes I read Ngaanyatjarra, especially on the videos when I read all the, we have to write all the Ngaanyatjarra stories to put it into the video, make a little sticker, we have to do it all in the Ngaanyatjarra, sometimes English, but the main one is the Ngaanyatjarra, we have to use that, cause that's the main one for the Ngaanyatjarra Media, and if they don't know how to read English they can still read it on the Ngaanyatjarra.

Even though Lucille is deaf, she is in charge of the Drop in Centre snack bar and communicates through sign language and handwritten notes. Patricia works at the college:

I like working 'cause you can know how to read, write, fax papers through, photocopying, all that things. Get learn more...so when people come in and ask you questions, or do something, interview with you, might do it correct or wrong must be, that's why we need to work.

Workers are able to access literacy resources, computers and fax machines in the workplace to facilitate their own personal and administrative literacies. Patricia sends faxes to organise fixing the family Toyota and does her telephone banking. Maisie prepares resources for Sunday School and organises her tax from the college. Similarly, as a community liaison officer at the office Clem sends official and personal faxes.

Literacy for governance

Meetings routinely punctuate the temporal rhythm of community life. Meeting strategies range across the oral-literate continuum. At community meetings cultural issues can override any written agenda. Unresolved family disputes spark unexpected outbursts and pleas for compassion. In this highly charged rhetorical context protocols and oral discourse, tangential to Western meeting procedure, are on display and a good orator utilises *tjitirpa watjalku* (indirect speech) to defuse simmering tensions.⁸⁹⁰ Other meetings

⁸⁸⁹ The Ngaanyatjarra Health Service Strengthening Families programme *Mukuhyanjulu Walykumunu Kanyinma* and Ngaanyatjarra Community College have worked together in the delivery of *Certificate III in Child Care in Aboriginal Communities* (developed through Yorganup Aboriginal Corporation for the Community Services Health Education Industry Training Council based on National Training Package).

⁸⁹⁰ Similar elements have been discussed in the Australian anthropological literature (Lieberman 1985; Myers 1986; Sansom 1980; Tonkinson 1978a). Brooks suggests that in the old days indirect speech '*tjitirpa*' was the preferred norm as direct speech could be interpreted as a challenge, a risky rhetorical form in a society where sorcery was prevalent. He also

Fig. 5.3 Work literacies

PLANT COLLECTION DATA

SAMPLE NO: 006 DATE: 2-11-04
 OBSERVER: Yin: ~~WAEALPUKA~~ Karpuka
 LOCATION: Ngarrat: Jarrntjard GPS DATA:
 SPECIES NAMES:
 WAEALPUKA *Suares*
 KURRUBUPUKA *Acacia tetragon*
 KURRUNANTIRRI *Lead finish*

HOW MANY?

VEGETATION TYPE *ngurrangka warta pakalayi*
milkuyu lightly wooded open area *purri* mulga woodland *kurrkapi*

LANDFORM *manta kutjupa-kutjupa*
pila flat sandplain *tali* sandune *rirra* rolling grav
karru drainage line *purri* breakaway *purthi-purthipa* scree slope

WHEN DID THIS COUNTRY BURN? *Wanyjama ngarra kampanji?*
not for v.v long time (not in living memory)

TELEPHONE MESSAGE
 To: [unclear] [unclear]
 From: Playgroup
 Date: 29/10/04 Time: [unclear]
 Message: Lembo, a litre of Milk
 20 oranges 20 apples
 20 bananas 2 litre of Cardal
 2 biscuits 1 litre of water

LAST WEEKS WORK
 WARRIBOON COMMUNITY
 P M B T1
 VIA ALICE SPRINGS
 NT 0872
 Pay period ending Friday 23/1/2004. Work area *Playgroup*
MEMORANDUM Must be received by noon the following Tuesday

NAME	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	TOTAL
[unclear]	0 + 0	0 + 0	0 + 0	0 + 0	0 + 0			
[unclear]	9:00-12:00	9:00-12:00	9:00-12:00	9:00-12:00	9:00-12:00			
[unclear]	9:00-12:00	9:00-12:00	9:00-12:00	9:00-12:00	9:00-12:00			
[unclear]	9:00-12:00	9:00-12:00	9:00-12:00	9:00-12:00	9:00-12:00			

TUNE ON THE RANGES RADIO ON 98FM

are held with predictable regularity and tend to conform to the textually mediated discourse structures of Western meeting procedures.⁸⁹¹ Shire Council meetings and, to a lesser extent, Ngaanyatjarra Council meetings incorporate aspects such as talking through the Chair and following agendas.

The small leadership cohort is well-versed in meeting procedures and the various tiers of governance, but is 'worn out' by long-term involvement in meetings, workshops, and advisory committees. Although participants regularly read meeting agendas, minutes and often reports, assistance is commonly needed in penetrating the discursive features of bureaucratic language. A leader expresses his frustration when observing adults unable to 'read between the lines' or comprehend the unfamiliar knowledge and procedures inherent in the discourse style of Europeans: 'still we get caught out when people use hard words and idioms when coming to talk about things, English is not our language'. As George explains:

I can read, but there are some words, really hard, like government words that I still don't understand... Like, when we go to meetings like Council meeting, I want to keep a note of what's been said at the meeting, like write it down, but I haven't got pad or notebook or anything like that.

Communicative interaction between Ngaanyatjarra and European interlocutors often results in what Liberman terms 'strange discourse' full of ambiguity and imprecise understandings. In spoken interaction 'horizons of *potential* meaning' are allowable, and indeterminacy or misunderstandings can be forgotten or glided over, and the sense of the conversation is still maintained through using appropriate turn-taking strategies and paralinguistic responses.⁸⁹² Such ambiguity is, however, not acceptable in textual interactions which demand precision and accuracy.⁸⁹³ Subtle negotiations of power are manifest in these intercultural relationships. Local leaders who are able to assert control in their own social space may find themselves marginalised in the public space where whitefellas assume authority because they have the discursive oral and literate practices required to 'manage' the community and mediate the burgeoning requirements of the

speculates that introduced speech events such as 'public meetings' have ushered in a new rhetorical context where *yarnangu* have learnt to employ 'straight talking' strategies that at first may have been a 'shock' or a linguistic transgression of the boundaries of normative social interaction (Brooks pers. comm. 1/12/04).

⁸⁹¹ Ngaanyatjarra Council meetings are held regularly on the third Wednesday of the month and this tradition has remained unchanged for some 25 years. NPYWC holds regular monthly meetings and an annual general meeting. Meetings of the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku Council are held regularly and, until recently, meetings of the ATSIC Western Desert Regional Council were attended regularly by elected Ngaanyatjarra representatives. Advisory committees also require Aboriginal participation, e.g. the NPYWC Executive and Health Advisory Committee for the Ngaanyatjarra Health Service.

⁸⁹² (Liberman 1985: 176–78, 197–202; Gumperz 1982; Gumperz and Hymes 1972). See also (Dudley et al. 1999).

⁸⁹³ See (Halliday and Hasan 1976; Halliday 1985).

bureaucracy.⁸⁹⁴ Wesley, who speaks English as a first language, is secondary educated and has community management and governance experience, says,

The amount of reading I do every day to fulfil my role as Project Officer or Chairperson or Governing Committee member or Native Title or Education or whatever, the amount of paperwork that comes across my desk is unbelievable and for me to keep up with all that I have to be capable of reading at a certain level. And with my experience, I went to what, Year 10? That's probably the minimum you'd need in this sort of situation...to be able to compete in this world, that is, with enough knowledge and confidence to be able to speak up. That's where we have a lot of people hiding in the bush back here and don't want to go out and speak up because it's, that confidence. A lot of our people rely on people telling them, like a lot of these mob will listen to and they'll trust everything that's said by any white person. Like must be this white person tells them something who works in their community and they'll listen to it and they'll believe that. They're not finding out themselves...they just got to rely on the Advisor telling them, well the Advisor only give them what will keep him happy.

It can be conjectured that in earlier policy eras the Aboriginal world view had a voice and a salience that is increasingly absent in public life. Everyday life has become more bureaucratised and policy decisions are made nationally, irrespective of local conditions and opinions. Ironically, the increasing complexity and volatility of the national policy environment is undermining pre-existing forms of local control and precluding Aboriginal people from engaging in governance. Government policy and structures introduced over recent decades have only served to increase Aboriginal dependency on the welfare state, to the extent where now 'localised and limited community autonomy struggles in a web of bureaucracy'.⁸⁹⁵ Government programmes are increasingly bound by stringent reporting and accounting requirements—including the preparation of financial reports, annual budgets and strategic plans—the complexity of which is often 'well beyond the knowledge base of the Indigenous stakeholders'.⁸⁹⁶ It is at the intersection of local conditions and the bureaucratic requirements of the State that the marginalisation of most Ngaanyatjarra from authority over their own affairs is heightened. This has become more acute since the abolition of ATSIC in 2004 and the introduction of 'mutual obligation': Shared Responsibility Agreements and a Regional Partnership Agreement (see Chapter 1).⁸⁹⁷ Paradoxically, the impermanence of government policy and bureaucratic structures hinders the systemic transmission of administrative literacies from one generation to the next as knowledge is rapidly redundant. The high turnover rate of staff also diminishes the systematic transmission of skills and knowledge.

⁸⁹⁴ (Batty 2005).

⁸⁹⁵ (Palmer 2005: 109). See (Altman and Sanders 1991).

⁸⁹⁶ (Palmer 2005: 109–110).

⁸⁹⁷ Under the policy of 'mutual obligation' the Howard Government, through the state-based Indigenous Co-ordination Centres, is negotiating Shared Responsibility Agreements directly with communities. In remote Australia the notion of 'community' remains a contested site as the community as a recently contrived construct is made up of disparate groups of individuals who may not carry the authority to speak for the broader community of interest. See (Altman 2004; Palmer 2004).

Administrative literacies

Government policy, since the inception of the welfare reform agenda and mutual obligation, is increasingly predicated upon individual literacy competence:⁸⁹⁸

This individual approach works best where the applicant has reasonable literacy and numeracy skills, viable use of English, adequate maintenance of personal records (i.e. income details, birth certificate, tax file information, rent accounts and essential services accounts), an understanding of Government programs and program delivery and a residential address for the receiving of relevant mail. To date, the lack of this individual capacity on the part of Ngaanyatjarra community members has been addressed by the Ngaanyatjarra communities pooling limited resources and capacity to represent themselves to Government and Government agencies.⁸⁹⁹

With increased state intervention and an expectation of individual responsibility the Ngaanyatjarra are faced with a decreasing capacity to control the administration of day to day life. New CDEP guidelines are placing the onus on individuals to take responsibility for personal administration, functions that were previously mediated by the broader Ngaanyatjarra collective.⁹⁰⁰ Individual 'bureaucratic literacy' is too complex for the majority of adults who lack the formal registers required for official oral or written interactions and busy staff have to assist with official phone calls and form-filling.⁹⁰¹ This accentuates the fact that for some adults signing their names is the extent of their literacy practice.⁹⁰² Incidentally, when asked to write a signature people are usually told to 'put their name', so even the conceptual distinction between 'name' and a signature representing legal proof of identity is blurred.⁹⁰³ Signalled cuts to municipal funding herald a potential decrease in office staff to deal with the bureaucratic interface and continue providing the safety net of economic support.⁹⁰⁴

In literate Western communities administrative literacies are synchronised with cultural practice and enacted by individuals in the domestic space (filing and retrieving tax information, bank statements, birth certificates and educational qualifications). Conversely,

⁸⁹⁸ See (McClure 2000).

⁸⁹⁹ (Thurtell 2003: 4-5).

⁹⁰⁰ In this community CDEP has been collective, allowing for discretion in how funds were distributed. The Howard government has introduced reforms to CDEP such as the 'no work, no pay' (Vanstone 2004) ruling and the requirement that 15-17 year olds receive a reduced CDEP payment and undertake accredited training to get skills to go on and get a 'real job' (Karvelas 26 January 2006). This is limiting the capacity for the community to flexibly adjust CDEP to match community reality without regulation breaches. It is projected that new regulations will not compel people to 'work' as they will be looked after by the social economy, i.e. family members on pensions.

⁹⁰¹ See Reder and Green's discussion of bureaucratic or 'public sector' literacies (Reder and Green 1983) and Cushman's analysis of the oral and literate strategies used by a marginalised urban American community in dealing with the state bureaucracy (Cushman 1998). See also (Barton and Hamilton 1998: 235).

⁹⁰² New CDEP eligibility forms introduced in 2004 are complex and time-consuming to fill in as applicants generally don't know personal details. Misunderstandings regarding overpayment of Centrelink moneys, including Abstudy, are common and confusing to individuals and often left to office staff to sort out.

⁹⁰³ Glass and Hackett—Interview 8/5/04.

⁹⁰⁴ The Ngaanyatjarra Council (Aboriginal Corporation) Savings Plan was conceived of in 1991. A funeral fund was also established many years ago. Deduction from CDEP wages are paid into a Ngaanyatjarra Council administered fund. This covers cost of transport of the coffin and undertakers expenses for funerals (Ngaanyatjarra Council 2000: 14). Individuals receiving UB under *Newstart* are precluded from the community savings plan and the funeral fund.

in Warburton the community office is the administrative hub that takes collective responsibility for receipt of mail, writing purchase orders for fuel and food, booking air flights, making phone calls to banks, government departments and parole officers, filling in tax returns, and registering births and deaths. Important documents (e.g. tax file numbers, firearms licences, driver's licences, bank details, training certificates) are filed in the office, the college or with staff 'so the kids don't get them and tear them up', as Una explains:

I get them government ones, Centrelink, pension [letters]...I can read them...I give it to the office person: 'Put it away in my file'. They are all in the file there. I don't keep that at home because it get burnt, the kids might, you know.

Houses do not have mail boxes. Rent, electricity and other 'bills' are paid as deductions on CDEP payslips.⁹⁰⁵ In general, everyday financial literacy is neglected. Young people know how to use ATMs, PIN numbers and passwords, but older people still need assistance.⁹⁰⁶ Official mail from government departments accounts for most correspondence received by individuals. Although addressed personally these anonymous, abstract interjections tend to be unrelated to everyday life and only the more literate like Jennifer respond:

I read them and I always check the number and all when I get a cheque, that it's right amount, same. Always read when I get mail...If a strange paper I always give it to her or the Advisor...Some hard words in it, I must tell them: 'What is it?' and all that. Find out what it is. I am confident.

Similarly, Leah receives 'Centrelinks main one and Commonwealth letters' and mediates for those less literate. For the majority, administrative literacies are dealt with in an *ad hoc* manner and official mail is often not picked up, or thrown in the bin unread. Mostly it is inconsequential that correspondence from debt collectors, banks, and superannuation or insurance companies is not dealt with. It may be considered that the Ngaanyatjarra live in a separate domain and this nonchalant disregard for literate compliance with the nation-state perhaps represents an assertion of their status as outsiders.

Written off—traffic, literacy and prison

Not addressing traffic infringement, licence suspension and outstanding licence transfer fee letters may, however, have dire consequences (Fig. 5.4a-b). Some adults discriminate between types of official correspondence, but many do not:

This one's rubbish, chuck it away. But we all know that blue letter—licence suspension or fine notice, have a look to see how much.

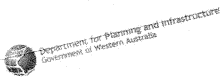
⁹⁰⁵ See (Thurtell 2003). Rent of \$10.00 per person per week is deducted out of weekly payments by the office.

⁹⁰⁶ The introduction of Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) in communities happened hand-in-hand with the changeover from cheques to computerised payment of welfare benefits and CDEP. This has introduced a further financial burden for people on low incomes as it costs \$2.50 per ATM transaction. An additional issue is that older people are known to entrust their cards and PIN numbers to family members who may be less than scrupulous. Another dilemma with ATMs is that people are unaware that even just checking the balance costs money as exemplified in the story of a pensioner who had her pension money debited by \$200 from transaction costs she had accumulated by repeatedly checking her balance.

Figs. 5.4 Administrative literacies: official motor vehicle correspondence

(a)

1APW610 CHRYSL SEDAN 13 02 04
 REASON: CONC LIC TRANSFER TO NORMAL RATE
 BALANCE OUTSTANDING: \$24.65
 WARBURTON COMMUNITY VIA LAVERTON 6440
 WARNING - THIS DOCUMENT SHALL HAVE NO EFFECT UNTIL THE IMPRINT OF THE CASH REGISTER OR OTHER AUTHORITY IS HEREON.



D. B. FORTE
 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

LICENSING SERVICES
 BOX R 1290 G.P.O. PERTH 6844
 WESTERN AUSTRALIA

RE: CHRYSL SEDAN REG NO: 1APW610
 ISSUED TO WARBURTON COMMUNITY VIA LAVERTON 6440

YOU WERE PREVIOUSLY ADVISED THAT AN UNDERCHARGE HAD RESULTED FROM A RECENT PAYMENT/VARIATION IN RESPECT OF THE LICENCE OF THE ABOVEMENTIONED VEHICLE. THIS UNDERCHARGE IS STILL OUTSTANDING.

AMOUNT DUE: \$24.65
 AMOUNT PAID: \$0.00
 DATE PAID: 29 10 01
 RECEIPT NO: 00000000



Department for Planning and Infrastructure
 Government of Western Australia

Your Ref. Customer Contact CVTOS
 Telephone 13 11 56

WARBURTON COMMUNITY VIA
 KALGOORLIE WA 6430

Dear Sir/Madam

Vehicle Licence Renewal Where Transfer Fees Have Not Been Paid

Your LDSTAR BOXTOP registration number [redacted] will expire on 16 April 2004.

This licence cannot be renewed until it has been transferred into your name. This requires the payment of the appropriate stamp duty and transfer fee. These fees are required to be paid within 28 days of purchase, at any Department for Planning and Infrastructure Centre on production of the completed vehicle transfer notice and the current licence papers or by forwarding the required documentation and your payment to the address below. Please make all cheques and money orders payable to the Department for Planning and Infrastructure.

You may also be required to fit a Government approved engine immobiliser to the vehicle prior to payment of the transfer. For further information visit our internet website at www.immobilisers.wa.gov.au or telephone our Call Centre on 131156.

Third party insurance coverage extends only for a period of fifteen days after the expiry date of the vehicle licence. Payment of both transfer and renewal fees must be finalised within this period.

The fees for renewal are listed below for your information. If a period of 28 days has expired since the purchase of this vehicle, penalties for non-payment of transfer fees may be added to these figures. A Tax Invoice will be produced upon payment.

For more information on fees, penalties and immobilisers please contact our Call Centre on 131156.

	Standard	
	6 Months	12 Months
Licence Fee:	\$10.45	\$20.90
Insurance:	\$2.86	\$5.50
GST on Insurance:	\$0.29	\$0.55
Stamp Duty on Insurance:	\$0.30	\$0.60
Recording Fee:	\$16.20	\$16.20
Adjustment:	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Due:	\$30.10	\$43.75

Yours sincerely

Dennis Forte

Dennis Forte
 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
 REGULATORY AND REGIONAL SERVICES

8 March 2004

Licensing and Regional Services
 GPO Box R1290 Perth
 Western Australia 6844
 Telephone 13 11 56
 Facsimile (08) 9427 8191

TOGETHER WITH THIS LICENCE TO BE SENT TO THE LICENSING CENTRE, PERTH BY POST TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS OR ALTERNATIVE PAYMENT OR ALTERNATIVE WITH THE DEPARTMENT.



Traffic Infringement Notice

Failure to Return Number Plates

Road Traffic Act 1974
Road Traffic (Infringements) Regulations 1975

Telephone Enquiries ☎ 13 11 56
From outside Western Australia (08) 9427 6464

PMB 71
ALICE SPRINGS NT 0871

PAYMENT DUE BY
18 March 2004
VEHICLE PLATE NUMBER
9HM166

(b)

Infringement Details:
It is alleged that you committed the offence of failing to return number plates 9HM166, for vehicle 1985 NISSAN UTE within 15 days of expiry of the vehicle registration on 20 December 2003.

- If you want this matter dealt with by this notice, you must pay \$100.00 as shown below before 18 March 2004.
- You can elect to have this matter dealt with by a court. To do this, advise Department for Planning and Infrastructure of your intentions by completing Electing Action by (Part B) on the reverse of this notice. You must return this notice before 18 March 2004 otherwise you will incur further costs. Do not pay the fees referred to in this notice.

OR
If you disposed of the vehicle prior to the expiry of the vehicle licence notice, instead, complete the Statement (Part A) on the reverse Planning and Infrastructure, GPO Box R1290, Perth WA 6844

If you take no action, this matter may be registered with the driver's licence or any vehicle licence held by you, may be suspended until the AMOUNT DUE is paid or an election is made. If the Registrar is directed to the Fines Enforcement Registry, Ground Floor, 32 St Georges Tce, Perth, WA, 6000 Telephone 1300 650 235 Facsimile 1300 650 599 Email fines@justice.wa.gov.au Further information on fines enforcement procedures can be obtained at www.justice.wa.gov.au

Infringement Number: PC04114213 Offence Date:

Fees Payable:
Penalty \$100.00

This Account shall remain unpaid until the Infringement of this

DEPARTMENT FOR PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE PAYMENT CENTRE Please do Not Debit
GPO BOX K777 PERTH WA 6842

- Easy ways to Pay:** * Receipt will be mailed
- By Mail:** Please detach and mail PAYMENT ADVISE with cheques or payment order payable to "Department for Planning and Infrastructure". Cheques are accepted subject to being met on 1st business day after date of payment.
 - By Phone:** Telephone (08) 9427 6464 for payment by Mastercard or Visa (24hr Service). Please have card ready.
 - By Internet:** Access our secure transaction site www.dpi.wa.gov.au and click on Online Payments button for payment by Bank of America (24hr Service).

For Any Enquiries Quote This Case No. CASE No. 04/605580

PENALTY \$100.00 COURT COSTS \$52.50 AMOUNT DUE \$152.50 DATE DUE 07-APR-04

Offender's Copy

Cashier's Copy

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE WESTERN AUSTRALIA FINES, PENALTIES AND INFRINGEMENTS NOTICES ENFORCEMENT ACT 1994

To: PMB 71 ALICE SPRINGS

0871

COURT ORDER TO PAY OR ELECT

TAKE NOTICE: An infringement notice was issued for the alleged offence described below. Because the penalty in the infringement notice has not been paid the notice has been registered with this Registry for enforcement.

PAY OR ELECT: Pay the Amount OR Make a time to pay arrangement OR By the due date ELECT in writing to have a complaint for this alleged offence heard by a Court of Petty Sessions. That may result in a Court order to suspend your licence until the AMOUNT DUE is paid or an election is made. If the Registrar is directed to the Fines Enforcement Registry, Ground Floor, 32 St Georges Tce, Perth, WA, 6000 Telephone 1300 650 235 Facsimile 1300 650 599 Email fines@justice.wa.gov.au Further information on fines enforcement procedures can be obtained at www.justice.wa.gov.au

YOUR LICENCE(S) MAY BE SUSPENDED

AMOUNT DUE \$175.00

Offender's Copy

Cashier's Copy

For Any Enquiries Quote This Case No. CASE No. 04/605580

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE WESTERN AUSTRALIA FINES, PENALTIES AND INFRINGEMENTS NOTICES ENFORCEMENT ACT 1994

To: HARBURTON RANGES CMNTY KALGOORLIE 0430

04/605580

CONFIRMATION OF LICENCE SUSPENSION ORDER

You must quote this Case No. at all times

Case No. 04/605580

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & INFRASTRUCTURE RETURN NUMBER PLATES

Infringement PC05982290

MVL No. 7LS080 Alleged Speed 159km/h

OR IF YOU HAVE CHANGED ADDRESS, IT IS FAILURE TO DO SO MAY RESULT IN YOUR LICENCE BEING SUSPENDED WITHOUT YOUR KNOWLEDGE.

AMOUNT DUE \$ 159.50 DATE DUE 07-APR-04

Offence Description: FAILING TO RETURN NUMBER PLATES

Date: 21-AUG-03 Location: Perth, Western Australia

MDL NO. 3822972

VEHICLE LICENCE NUMBER(S)

AMOUNT DUE \$ 175.00 DATE 08-MAR-04

WHEN SUSPENSION OCCURRED TIME 17:30

10-MAR-04 DATE

REGISTRAR

McLean explains how fines enforcement letters ‘create a trap...for people who keep poor personal records, frequently change addresses, experience poverty’ as they ‘become enmeshed in a trap in the Justice system that’s designed almost perfectly to ensnare them’.⁹⁰⁷ An individual who leaves unpaid fines for long enough by not responding to correspondence from the Fines Enforcement Registry or the Department of Justice (or does not undertake fines enforcement processes to clear the fines, i.e. community work), will eventually enter a formal breach process and incur a period of incarceration.⁹⁰⁸ Most adults are inadequately educated about the consequences of unpaid fines, driver’s licences and fines enforcement:

They have no idea of the volume and amounts, they don’t understand how long it takes to ‘work off’ a fine, for example 300 Work Development Order hours to be completed in a set time. Fines can be overdue for cultural reasons, for example, people travelling or away on Business. The whole system is very complicated even for whitefellas and about 90% don’t understand much about the system...Mostly what people do understand is that they can do community work instead of paying off fines.⁹⁰⁹

Many Ngaanyatjarra are not understanding how abandoning a car in the bush with the number plates left on, or buying and selling cars with no official transfer papers—then not reading infringement notices, not paying the ensuing fines, and continuing to drive—could eventually result in imprisonment for driving under licence suspension.

Most people don’t know that you have to return number plates or else you get a \$1658 fine for unreturned plates. Everyone takes for granted that people understand, but there is no specific education...All they really understand is that your licence can be suspended for unpaid fines and that you can go to jail for unpaid fines...In court all the magistrate says is, say \$150 fine, but nowhere to pay it and police won’t take money for fines on the Lands.⁹¹⁰

Traffic offences and fines management account for the high imprisonment rate from the Lands.⁹¹¹ Paradoxically, although communities recognise the importance of licensed drivers and the payment of fines, they face insurmountable barriers, including language and literacy. Even gaining a first licence is restricted by regulations requiring supervision and a written log book, conditions that don’t suit the context. Increased fine defaults are

⁹⁰⁷ McLean—Interview 9/9/04.

⁹⁰⁸ There are two sorts of fines:

1) Infringements issued by a government department when regulations are infringed, e.g. unreturned plates, unpaid motor vehicle transfer fees, speeding tickets, parking tickets. Infringements can be paid outright or paid off. An individual cannot do community service and cannot go to jail to pay off fines. Under an infringement a driver’s licence may be suspended. Outstanding fines and infringements must be addressed before taking a licence test or seeking a licence renewal.

2) Court fines, e.g. for assault, break and enter, damage, disorderly conduct, or substance abuse. First offenders can go to court or receive a fine or a community work order. This is determined in court at the time so that fines can be converted to a work order (Sheriff—Phone interview August 2004).

⁹⁰⁹ (Sheriff—Phone interview August 2004). Community Work Orders are issued as court orders by the Department of Justice. In an urban context an individual on *Newstart* allowance does community hours on top of their allowance. However in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands people do not receive *Newstart* so individuals doing community hours are paid CDEP (otherwise they have no income). Supervisory Work Orders are issued in tandem with early parole. When first released from prison individuals sign up for *Newstart* and when back in the community they are signed on to CDEP.

⁹¹⁰ Sheriff—Phone interview August 2004.

occurring in part because there is no effective payment system under the *Fines, Penalties and Infringement Notices Enforcement Act 1994* (WA).⁹¹² Also individuals have insufficient income and no capacity to save on CDEP or Centrelink.⁹¹³

The Sheriff asserts that 'literacy issues start from the first court appearance as people don't understand what they read or what they agree to':

Personal record keeping skills is often an issue. In order to pay fines person needs to keep letter, but people lose letters. People are bombarded with so many bits of paper they don't know what to do with.

For instance, when one young woman received a letter regarding \$10,000 worth of fines owing, she misread the letter and thought she had *won* \$10,000. A policeman tells me, 'they can't read and write, no-one can read and write':

We always explain the bail form to them and make sure they know when to come to court and if they can't get there to ring up or they'll get a bench warrant, but most of them just screw it up and throw it on the ground or later they find it screwed up in their jeans pocket. They think: 'Oh that policeman told me I don't need this paper' and they don't read it.⁹¹⁴

The arrest rate for unlicensed driving is increasing and even the well-intentioned are curtailed by the preconditions of poverty and remoteness. As an aside, mobility and motor cars are integral to contemporary social and cultural practice and most adults drive, although having a driver's licence is not assumed cultural practice. Simultaneously, everyday life has become more regulated by the State. Driver's licences are now required for driving on 'any road available and used by the public' (*Road Traffic Act* WA)—and with an increased police presence in the region licences are checked more assiduously. This pertains to the Great Central Road, the main arterial linking Laverton with the Ngaanyatjarra communities, Docker River and the NT. Central desert people feel an intense spiritual and social connection to this road because it follows the *yimarra*—the route

⁹¹¹ Prison costs the state \$280 a day in the public prison system, \$145 a day in Acacia Prison (a private prison) and \$9–\$13 a week for someone on parole. Anecdotal evidence suggests that about one-third of prisoners in EGRP (usually short term prisoners) are from the Ngaanyatjarra Lands (Staples pers. comm. November 2004).

⁹¹² The *Sentencing Act 1995* (WA) replaced the *Aboriginal Communities Act 1979* (WA). Now a Justice of the Peace in the Warburton Magistrate's Court of Petty Sessions is no longer able to issue the preferred short sentence of up to three months for substance abuse or domestic violence to be served within the Lands. The court is left with the choice of a sentence of six or more months or a fine not exceeding \$5,000 (Parole Officer pers. comm. September 2004). See (Staples and Cane 2002: 9).

⁹¹³ CDEP payment is based on a weekly allocation per number of signed up recipients. The pool of CDEP money is finite, averaging out to approximately \$210 per person p.w. Consequently, if too many people receive wages then the average weekly net pay is reduced. A regular CDEP worker receives between \$18,000–\$25,000 p.a. An additional CPS top-up supplement of approx. \$20 per fortnight is received from Centrelink. A 'sit down' allocation is paid as the safety net base pay rate (with any hour of work paid in addition to the 'sit down' allocation). An individual receiving only 'sit down' is paid approximately \$6,500–\$7,500 p.a., and receives around \$163 p.w. 'sit down' before deductions are taken out. Thus an individual on 'sit-down' receives about \$80.00 - \$95.00 a week minus further deductions for 'book-up', whereas a regular worker receives about \$175 net p.w. with deductions taken out. Everyone with children received Family Allowance: Family Tax A of around \$130.00 p.w. per child plus Family Tax B because they are below the low income threshold. Single Parents received Parenting Payment plus Family Allowance but cannot access CDEP. Older people receive the Pension and a few adults are on the Disability Allowance (Warburton Office 2004).

⁹¹⁴ Police pers. comm. 2004.

that people traditionally walked from rockhole to rockhole. Moreover, they were instrumental in building the road in accordance with the line of rockholes. From their perspective they own the road because it is on their country and thus should be outside the domain of Western law and licensing requirements.

The consequence of administrative 'illiteracy' can be incarceration. However, people see only 'the unfairness of the white justice system for them' and perceive incarceration for fines and traffic offences as *kunpu-kunpu palyara*—'doing it for nothing'.⁹¹⁵ Silas, who also works for the Department of Justice, explains:

That's why people use that word all the time: 'No, I'm in here for nothing. *Kunpu-kunpu*, they picking on me for nothing.'... But that person must have done something. He or she must have done something like, never paid the fine or never done their work, but they don't understand and they use that word *kunpu-kunpu*... but they don't know the back side of that thing, they don't know, background, what's going on. They don't know... or can't understand.

Louisa's teenage son Jake reflects on this problem:

Some boys they were in prison and on court time they don't understand what the judge telling them, they get sentence or go in prison for, they get their months... they keep on ringing up to the shop, worrying about their children, wife, they keep going in prison.

Consequently, many Ngaanyatjarra men are typically spending part of their youth in prison—the 'inside world'—although this pattern tends to recede once they marry and have children.⁹¹⁶ Nevertheless, children are witnessing the incarceration of parents and siblings and absorbing this as normative cultural practice.⁹¹⁷ As one young fella explains:

I grew up in prison, been going up and down... I come out from prison and do silly things, you know... No good, no life in jail. No families... Just like you're finished, same like nothing, you're looking and look like ghosts walking around, no families.

The majority are at Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison (EGRP) in Kalgoorlie-Boulder:

It's a bit easy, but the other prisons like Perth, it's a bit hard. But in Kalgoorlie it's a lot of Aboriginals there like families, uncles and brothers in Kalgoorlie, when I was there I was happy to see them.

Ironically, prison offers an under-recognised site for ongoing education and training for adults from remote communities.⁹¹⁸ Research in the NT indicates that detention is seen by

⁹¹⁵ Charlie Staples—Interview May 2004.

⁹¹⁶ Nationally Indigenous men have higher levels of contact with the criminal justice system at an earlier age, see (Ogilvie and Van Zyl 2001; Putt 1999; Putt et al. 2005). Similarly, ethnographic studies in the United States indicate age-related patterns of criminal involvement among young males which recedes during the mid-twenties (Sullivan 1996: 211; Sullivan 1989).

⁹¹⁷ The Sheriff in Kalgoorlie describes overhearing a father from the Ngaanyatjarra Lands saying to his son: 'Everybody has to go to jail sometime, so get up and go to court.' (Sheriff pers. comm. 2004).

⁹¹⁸ International research with incarcerated youth shows that some perceive themselves as failures in the education system yet find textual expression through local literacies (Blake 2004) and letter writing (Wilson 2000a) in prison.

young men as a chance for a 'different experience' with some 'compelling attractions' including the 'opportunity to be stronger and smarter'...

...school in detention was described as more interesting and rewarding than the "outside" alternative because of its broadness, its focus upon basic individual literacy and numeracy needs, the sporting opportunities and the increased access to outside information such as documentaries and movies.⁹¹⁹

Similarly, Juvenile Detention offers a site for learning for compulsory school-aged youth. This experience has been a source of pride for young men like Troy:

They shift me to other school, to Unit 3, I was starting first Number 1, Number 2, Number 3. Then I got to Number 3...3 was bit harder...I was know for the easier stuff like maths, and they put to Number 2...I was proud 'cause I was working for money...doing English and all that, was good.

Troy later had a short spell at EGRP:

When I was in there I was going to school, always do about things, words, words and numbers, 'cause I was making own story about this place and dreamtime stories and it was good going to school.

Prisons have 'education centres' where modules are delivered from nationally accredited Training Packages in hospitality, horticulture and motor mechanics, as well as basic adult literacy and numeracy courses and compulsory Occupational Health and Safety Courses. Men like Kenny have taken advantage of these courses:

Put my name up there, then we done a bricklaying course like that, done a welding in the school...Then I came back and done some in Boulder, like tutoring. When I came back from that way, in Boulder for seven months. That one lady she was working there, she seen me. "Ah you doing things good and quick and you know, we're giving you real easy job, we'll give you this tutoring, literacy, something like that. Done that. They was helping me to do that thing now, they put me on a computer.

For some the education centre is a sanctuary:

They do all those schooling there those boys from out here. Can do it there, quiet and sober, when you're wearing the greens. Do those courses 'cause it helps with the parole plan, get out quicker if you do courses...Do them courses to prove that we been good. School room is better than working, scrubbing walls and that...When those blokes leave, so excited to leave and come home. They can take all their work and certificates with them, but they so excited to go home they just run out and leave it in their cells or somewhere.

Unfortunately, there is little articulation between prison education and community life, representing yet another instance of the State's failure to articulate with the real needs of its remote populace. Statements of Attainment are issued for modules or full certificates, however the onus is on ex-prisoners to store them in the unlikely event that they may mean something in the future. To most ex-prisoners credentialling has little relevance, as Kenny admits: 'I brought a paper like this for the college but I threw it away, somewhere in the bush there'. Additionally, the Privacy Act works against a community Registered Training

⁹¹⁹ (Ogilvie and Van Zyl 2001: 4).

Organisations accessing this information, so accreditation gained in prison is rarely transferred to the CDEP context. Prison provides a new normative frame within which individuals are separated from familiar surroundings and able to take on the attributes of the new environment including participation in education and employment. Such individualistic practice generally cannot be maintained once young people return to the self-regulated community environment.

Literacy as cultural practice

The office is the locus of social interaction and the site where people see and hear community news. Notices and faxes are mostly written in English and posted on the office wall. Different modalities are activated for communicating information: adults decode text or graphic symbols and the more literate mediate and 'reshape' written notices into oral modes for those less literate.⁹²⁰ Information dissemination is mostly oral and two-way radios let people know what is going on all the time so events are organised without a whitefella intermediary. During fieldwork I counted and sorted public notices from the office and found two main types of notices.⁹²¹

Firstly, notices disseminating information on the administration of day to day life (Fig. 5.5):

<i>Information</i>										
Type:	Office notices	Ngaany atjarra. Health Service	School	Shire notices	Store or Roadhouse	Job ads	Notices from community member	Ngaanyatjarra Media	Ngaanyatjarra Council	Land Management Unit
No.	21	14	12	7	5	5	5	4	3	1

Secondly, notices advertising events (Fig. 5.6):

<i>Events</i>									
Type:	Funeral notices	Mining meetings: Native Title Unit	Sports Carnivals	NPYWC notice	Concerts, festivals, etc	Christian Fellowship	Maruku Arts	Youth Arts	Sunday School
No.	30	18	10	9	9	9	5	2	1

On one level the notices represent a framework of everyday sociocultural events and administrative business. This, however, belies another important dynamic as the notices also signpost 'practice' and provide insights into how people use text in contexts that matter culturally. I return here to Ortner's notion that an instance of practice can only be

⁹²⁰ (Heath 1983: 200).

⁹²¹ *Information notices*: Information: Shire (road reports) Ngaanyatjarra Media (training), Ngaanyatjarra Health (visits from dentist, vaccinations, vet, audiologist); school notices, electoral notices, swimming pool rules, music festivals, ads (job, car for sale), community information (phones, plumber, rubbish collection, tax), government media releases. *Events notices*: Maruku Arts, Christian Fellowship/Conventions, sports carnivals, NPYWC *Kungka* Career Conference, youth arts, visitors, films, community barbecues. Meetings: Native Title (trips, mining negotiation/distribution meetings), NPYWC community, CALM/Land management, meeting cancellation/postponement notices.

considered in relation to the structures or cultural schemas that shape it.⁹²² Over the remaining section of this chapter I begin to describe instances of ‘generationally differentiated’ cultural practice.⁹²³ Through these cultural instances I seek to show that when the context is relevant and embedded with social meaning, literacy practices are being enacted, but enacted in a manner indicating a tendency to ‘do the cultural thing’.⁹²⁴ That is, the literacy events are linked to each other and situated within ‘a culturally standardized frame of some sort’.⁹²⁵ I also draw attention to the less visible roles and identities that adults assume often in domains shaped by traditional cultural or Christian schemas where literate ways of doing things have become taken for granted practice.⁹²⁶

Purnu—the ‘family business’

Kayleen reads faxes in the office announcing the pending arrival of ‘*Maruku* Arts and Crafts’ (Fig. 5.7), known colloquially as the ‘*purnu*-man’.⁹²⁷ She alerts her family, the Carpenters, who have been preparing wooden artefacts, or *purnu*, for sale. The notices are easily recognisable to non-literates and word spreads. The more astute reader is advantaged by comprehending the detailed text stipulating exact sizes required as this knowledge will ensure a more lucrative income on the day of sale as the *purnu*-man is discerning and items are rejected if not required or the quality is poor. To prepare for the *purnu*-man, locals work at a time and location of their choosing. Elders go out bush to select wood, tools are purchased and family groups undertake carving, rasping, sanding and burning pokerwork designs onto artefacts with hot wire. An older woman comments: ‘only writing I do was just the artefacts, *purnu*, that’s all, that’s part of *yarnangu* way, by design’. In the Carpenter family, Kayleen and her sisters are employed under CDEP at the community office and the Shire and only have time to participate in artefact production on weekends. As artefacts are completed they are stored in boxes, under beds and in locked rooms so finished items are protected and accumulate in preparation for the *purnu*-man’s visit.

⁹²² (Ortner 1989: 12).

⁹²³ (Merlan 1998: 92).

⁹²⁴ (Ortner 1989: 127).

⁹²⁵ (Ortner 1989: 67).

⁹²⁶ (Barton and Padmore 1994; Barton and Hall 2000; Ivanic and Hamilton 1990). Stephen Reder also indicates the importance of roles and domains of practice in the development of his ‘practice engagement theory’ of literacy (Reder 1994).

⁹²⁷ *Maruku* Arts and Crafts, based at Uluru National Park in the NT, was established in 1984 by Pitjantjatjara people in SA and NT, and subsequently spread to the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. It is an Aboriginal enterprise, supported by effective non-Aboriginal staff. *Purnu* is a polysemous noun meaning wooden artefact; but is also commonly used to refer to a category of related words—tree, bush, plant, wood, splinter, stick and log (Glass and Hackett 2003: 343).

Fig. 5.5 Information notices

**RUBBISH
COLLECTION**


WEDNESDAY

**PUT ALL YOUR
UNWANTED
RUBBISH OUT THE
FRONT OF YOUR
HOUSE.**

**WORKERS
WANTED!!!!**

WORKING ON THE
POOL.

PLEASE SEE
[REDACTED] OR
THE OFFICE.

 **NEEDLE TIME AGAIN**



ALL YOUNG PEOPLE

AGED 12-17 Years

Starting Tuesday 2nd November

Bring an adult family member
and come and get your needle,
same one the babies get.

Be healthy be happy.



**BRING YOUR
COMMUNITY
ON THE**

6.7 SEPTEMBER 2004



**BRING YOUR
GROUP CERTIFICATES
AND
SOCIAL SECURITY
PAPER WORK WITH YOU**

60 [REDACTED]
REGARDS [REDACTED]

01-10-2004 11:47 P:\MANAGER\KINGS SCHOOL... 005 P.00000 01-10

School Assembly

Monday
13 December 2004
5:00 PM

 **School Grounds** 

Join Us
For Christmas Songs
And Class
Presentations!

Everyone Welcome!

00-00 00 000 00-00 000 000 00 0000

Fig. 5.6. Event notices

MT MARGARET REUNION

6,7,8TH OCTOBER

INVITING PEOPLE FROM

THE NGAANYATJARRA

LANDS TO THE CONVENTION

ON BEHALF OF THE MT MARGARET COMMITTEE

AND [REDACTED] WARBURTON COMMUNITY CHURCH

Warburton Community Church Outreach Meetings and Fellowship At Mantamaru Community Friday 27th - Sunday 29th February

"Let us run with patience, the race that is set before us."
Hebrews Chapter : 12 Verse : 1

HELLO KIDS

THERE WILL BE SUNDAY SCHOOL BEFORE SWIMMING AT [REDACTED] PLACE SO COME AND DO COLOURING ALSO LISTEN ABOUT JESUS

COME ALONG JESUS LOVES YOU

Docker River Sports Weekend & Church Inma

Starts Friday 13th August
Ends Monday 16th August

Come to Docker River this weekend and enjoy great food from our top-rating pub/cafeteria Plus lots of physical fun for all ages, including Tug-o-war and Softball
Then stay over for the Lutheran Church Sunday Worship which is beginning
Saturday 14th - Thursday 16th August
Check in Docker River
Book 13 Days Prior

WALUNGURRU SPORTS WEEKEND (Kintore)

KIDS ATHLETICS - Friday BLUE
LIGHT DISCO - Friday
FOOTBALL
SOFTBALL
BATTLE OF THE BANDS - Saturday
GOSPEL NIGHT - Sunday

PLEASE BRING YOUR MEDICINE AND NIGHTPATROL (fuel and food vouchers available for Nightpatrol workers ONLY see Council on arrival)

KINTORE IS A DRY COMMUNITY NO ALCOHOL OR DRUGS ALLOWED

"CASH PRIZES"

24TH SEPTEMBER - 27TH SEPTEMBER

CONTACT [REDACTED] (President) 8956 8328
[REDACTED] (Sports & Rec) 8956 8669 or fax 8956 8569

Everyone come and enjoy PALYA!

NGAANYATJARRA PITJANTJARRA YANKUNYATJARRA WOMEN'S COUNCIL ABORIGINAL CORPORATION
KULILAYA MNINYA TJUJA
NPY Women's Council
LAW & CULTURE
12-16 July 2004
Apankanu
Near Young's Well
Ernabella
Bring your swag, blankets, billycan, saucepan, pemmikin and medicine.
Food will be provided.
Bring your baskets to sell.
Ring 8950 5445 or fax 8952 3742

NGAANYATJARRA
COUNCIL (Aboriginal Corporation)
NATIVE TITLE UNIT
CANCELLED
'One Claim'
Meeting
at Patjarr
The meeting for people of the GIBSON DESERT CLAIM to talk about joining the Claims together into one big Ngaanyatjarrra Claim to be held at Patjarr on Thursday, 19 February and Friday, 20 February has been **CANCELLED** because of the rains and the bad condition of roads.
Further notices will be sent when a new date for this meeting is decided.
Please ring the Native Title Unit in Alice Springs on 8950 1740 if you need more information

PUKATJA SPORTS CARNIVAL
SEPT 25 26 27 2004
THERE WILL BE A
FOOTBALL
GRAND FINAL WINNER \$2000.00
RUNNER UP \$1000.00
SOFTBALL
GRAND FINAL WINNER \$500.00
RUNNER UP \$250.00
DASH FOR CASH
\$300 WINNER
SPEAR THROWING
\$200 WINNER
WOMENS BUCKET RACE
\$150 WINNER
CONCERT
FRIDAY SATURDAY & SUNDAY NIGHT
FEATURING
PUKATJA BAND
TJUPI
SUNLIGHT BAND
THUNDER BOYS
AND MORE....
FOR MORE INFORMATION RING [REDACTED] 89562966
ALL WELCOME NO PERMITS

Fig. 5.7. Purnu and literacy

MARUKU ARTS

PUNU BUYING TRIP

THE ONLY PUNU WE CAN BUY WILL BE

SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZE WIRA (BOWLS)
 SMALL LIZARDS (ONLY SMALL ONES)
 *****KALI (ALL SIZES) *****
 MUSIC STICKS (SMALL & MEDIUM SIZE)

THANK YOU FOR HELPING, SALES HAVE PICKED UP
 OVER JULY AND AUGUST BUT WE ARE STILL DESPERATE
 FOR THE ABOVE TO KEEP ON TRADING PROPERLY BOTH
 FOR STOCK IN THE GALLERY AND FOR ORDERS

Tuesday 7 th Sept	Afternoon	Blackstone
Wednesday 8 th Sept	Morning	Jamieson
	Afternoon	Warburton
Thursday 9 th Sept	Morning	Wanarn
	Afternoon	Warakurna
Friday 10 th Sept	Morning	Tjukuria

Times may vary depending on conditions we will notify you of any change

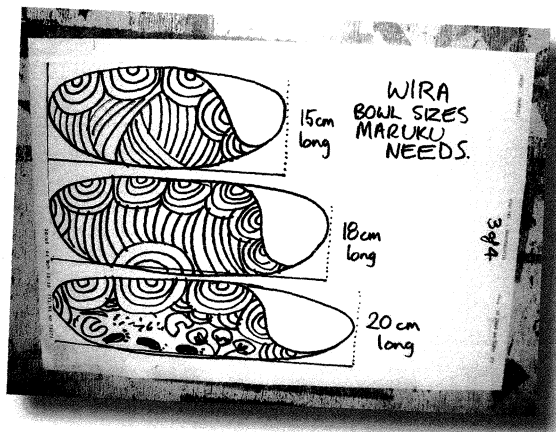
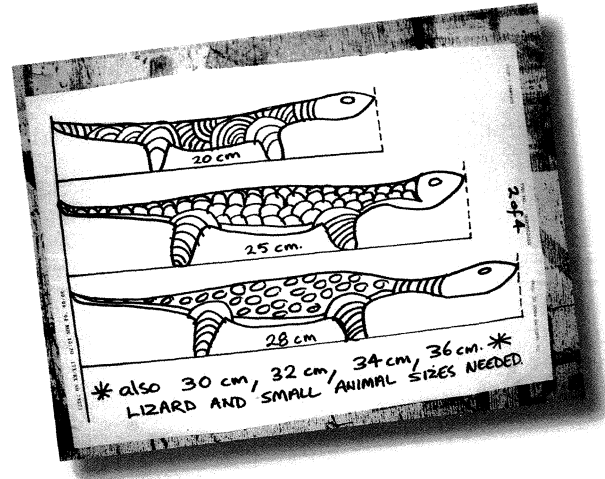
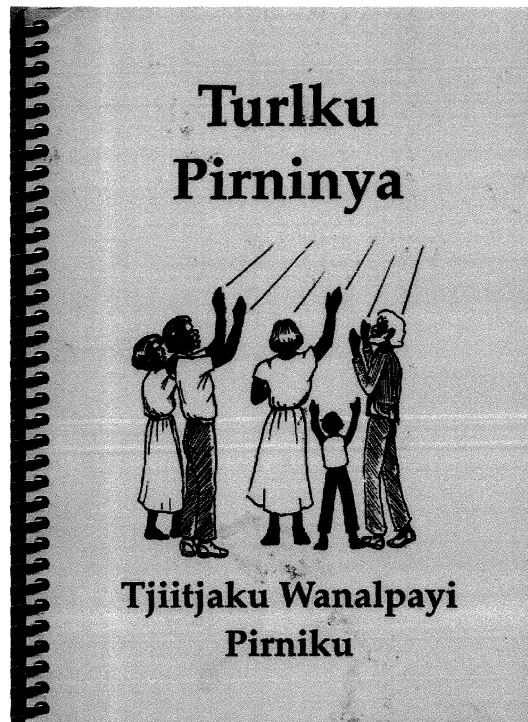
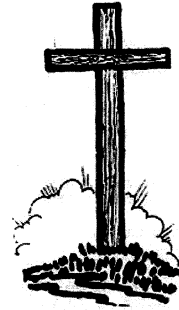


Fig. 5.8. Church literacies



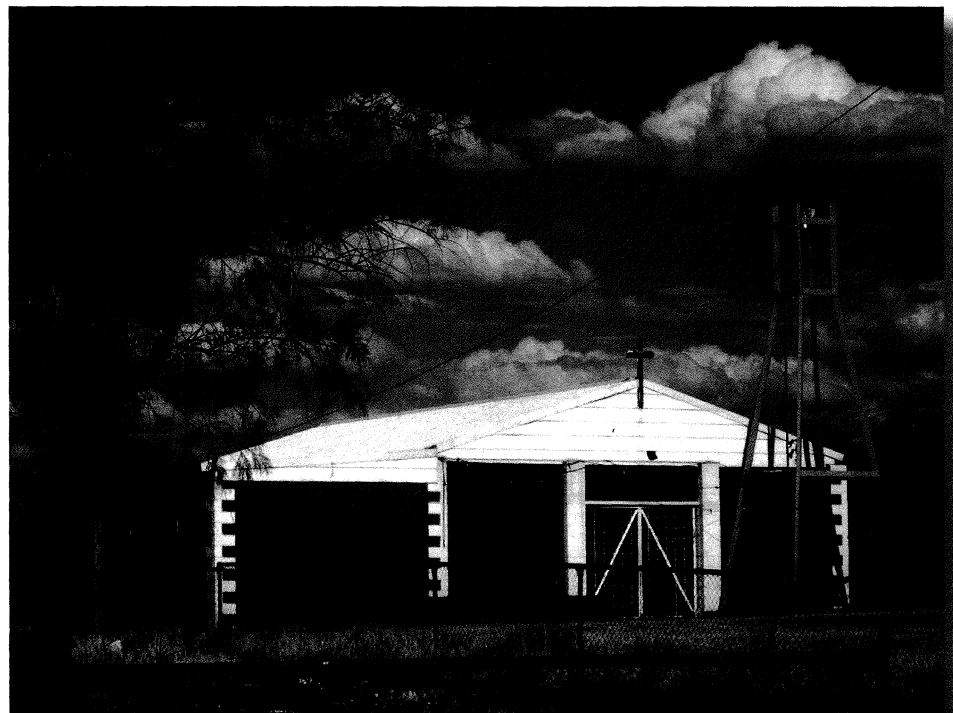
22. Tjiitjalu-rni Kanyinma
Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross (Redemption 390)

Tjiitjalu-rni kanyinma
Wartangka yitingka.
Palunyanya tjiitjalu-rni
Palyarungulkitja.
Tjiitjanya wartangka.
Mularrkuliku-rna.
Palunyanya pitjaku
Kutikatikitja.
Ngaralanytja wartangka
Tjiitjalu-rni nyangu.
Ngarlurringu, watjarnu,
"Pitja, wanala-rni."
Tjiitjanya wartangka,
Tirtu wanalku-rna.
Palunyanya pitjaku,
Kutikatikitja.
Palunyangka nyinarra
Mularrkulinma-rna.
Katukutu ngayulu-rna
Matjarpaku ngula.
Tjiitjanya wartangka,
Mularrkuliku-rna,
Palunyanya pitjaku
Kutikatikitja.



Jesus, keep me near the Cross; There a precious fountain,
Free to all, a healing stream, Flows from Calv'ry's mountain
In the Cross, in the Cross,
Be my glory ever,
Till my raptured soul shall find
Rest beyond the river.

Public Domain



Warburton church building.

It is a hot November day and the big *Maruku* Arts truck pulls into town and parks outside the store ready to begin buying.⁹²⁸ Word goes around that the truck has arrived and cars arrive laden with artefacts. The *purnu*-man spreads a big tarpaulin on the ground and people sit in family groups around the edge. Older family members who are absent or too frail to attend entrust younger people to enact the transaction. Over the morning some 50 people mill around, some sell, others merely watch. Most sell only a few items, but the Carpenter family unload many boxes of high quality artefacts. The *purnu*-man categorises and codes items by type and size by measuring them against a standardised scale. Reminiscent of a medieval market, a public standardised measure (rendered on the tarpaulin) ensures transactional transparency in the commodity exchange so even non-literates can ‘read’ the graphic representation and witness the exchange. After items are categorised the *purnu*-man calculates the total value and the sellers immediately receive cash payment. The market lasts about two hours and \$6,498.50 is distributed between 19 sellers. Individuals earn between \$35–\$1300, with average earnings around \$200–\$400.⁹²⁹ Children skip school and accompany elders to observe and absorb the practice. *Purnu* is a fertile site for the transmission of traditional knowledge, and artefact production and enterprise acumen. Children observe elders undertaking planning, preparation, organisation, time management tasks and perceive that information is acquired through decoding written notices. They see older kin working collaboratively to earn cash income and imbibe respect for cultural practice. Social relatedness embedded in maths concepts is reinforced as children learn that artefacts (lizards and clapping sticks) are sold only *kurrirarra* – in identical ‘pairs’ (from *kurri* meaning ‘spouse’ + *-arra* a suffix meaning ‘two’ or ‘a pair of’).⁹³⁰ Other numeracy events

⁹²⁸ Older people have been producing artefacts for sale in the cash economy since the late 1950s when small sums of money were earned by selling to stores in Laverton (Berndt and Berndt 1959: 2–3) and the DNW-controlled Aboriginal Arts Centre in Perth (DNW Newsletter Vol.2, No.1 August 1971).

⁹²⁹ *Maruku* Arts and Crafts records show that in the years 1996–2001 the monies paid to Ngaanyatjarra communities for artefacts averaged \$130,000 p.a. (McFarlane 2001) It is well understood that an economic development problem is faced by Aboriginal people living in remote Australia. Solutions other than conventional training for employment in the mainstream labour market are needed. Writers discuss options such as the development of the ‘customary economy’ and the hybrid economy’ (Altman 2005a; Altman 2005b). Land-based piece work or ‘cottage’ industry such as artefact-making exemplifies customary activity blending with business to provide a direct cash income. The hybrid economy also includes income earned from land-based seed and to a lesser extent, sandalwood harvesting and bush medicines. A market development project in Alice Springs, ‘Outback Bush Foods’, has provided a reliable market for collected seed since 1998 (Jock Morse pers. comm. January 2004). In addition, the customary economy in the Lands includes spinifex and raffia baskets. Since 1995 NPY Women’s Council has supported basket production and in the 1999/2000 financial year baskets worth around \$20,000 were produced in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands (McFarlane 2001: 58). Other piece work examples include: bead necklaces; acrylic painting; slumped art glass (<http://www.warburtonarts.com/site/glass.php>); and ceramics. Products are sold privately to individuals for cash or through the local Cultural Centre shop, roadhouses, or galleries in cities (<http://www.warburtonarts.com/site/index.php>).

⁹³⁰ Numeration is embedded in other parts of speech including nominals: *kutju* – one/single; *kutjarra* – two/dual; *mankurr(pa)* – three; *pimi* – many/plural, and adverbs: *kutjuwarra* – ‘once’; *kutjarrangara* – ‘twice’; *mankurrngara* – ‘three times’; *pimringara* – ‘many times’; and the pronoun system incorporating singular, dual and plural personal pronouns and enclitics.

are also observed as lengths are measured, categorised, items added, numbers called out and money calculated.⁹³¹

The church

Like his father before him, Silas assumes a mediating role as a church and community leader:

Sometimes I read newspapers, you know, what's going on in Australia or in the world, what's happening. And I tell my auntie or I tell my people, families in language then. It's very important to read the thing and tell the people in language what's going to happen. Like this problem we have if the money that the government people been giving it to the Aboriginal community and the government people been say that they been wasting a lot of money on ATSIC. And they getting fed up with giving money all the time. And that's why I tell them sort of things to the people who don't understand...about what's happening like the government side. Like now, the election. You know I say there's two man, he's going for that election. One is Liberal and one is Labor, and I tell them...Because without I'm telling them, they don't know what's going on in the world. You know it's too hard and something might happen in Warburton or in the Ngaanyatjarra Land and they might say: 'Why didn't people tell us?'

Silas received no formal evangelising training at GBTI, and only a little assistance from the missionary linguists. Instead he describes an intergenerational process of 'situated learning':⁹³²

I used to look at my father and I used to look at the missionaries and I used to look at my uncle and I would sometimes ask my father, or ask my uncle which passage he been read...I never went there, just learn by looking and learning from the way that person conduct that service.

At home he has devised his own 'Bible study' programme:

I got the book home about how to be a successful pastor. I got that and that help me too, so I can be guided, guided by that doctrine...I got videos about like Jimmy Swaggart and I got video about Billy Graham and in my spare time I sit and watch. I sit down and watch how they do it and I think: 'Ah well I'll try and preach this subject what this man been preach.' But I wouldn't go on his, I wouldn't go on his way when he was preaching, but I'll change it...Because if you want to be a preacher, you got to be yourself...like I can't copy...But I can get a, like a feedback. But I can't be like Billy Graham or I can't be like Jimmy Swaggart, you know, I got to be myself.

He prepares his service at home: 'I make my preparation by reading my story first hand and I keep it in the section, which one can I read'. His practice includes writing notes, (often from a book of prepared sermons) for telegraphic reference when delivering his sermon:

Sometime I write and keep it in a...in a column so I wouldn't forget...like a one page, then I look at it and I think, ah well, now I got to say this, I got to say that. So I don't have to, you know, like twist off. It's very important to go on that.

Silas then brings his notes to the service in an A4 leather-bound wallet.

⁹³¹ See (Saxe 1988) for a discussion on how unschooled Brazilian child street vendors use mathematical strategies with numeracy acquired through social practice. See also (Saxe 1981) for a discussion on 'traditional' numeracy in Papua New Guinea. Traditional numeracy has also been explored in the Australian Aboriginal education literature (Levinson 1997).

⁹³² (Lave and Wenger 1991).

The procedure of most services is similar. On Sunday morning the gospel band warms up, and this attracts a small congregation of mainly older people who gather on the grass in front of the church; larger gatherings are more common at funerals and Easter or Christmas Conventions. Silas—attired in a white shirt, black pants, polished shoes and reading glasses—takes the service:

When I take the church service, some of my audience...can't hear much about English, so I preach in language too...I never been reading from the Ngaanyatjarra Bible but I been like translating out of my own, from the English Bible, and I translate it...I talk in language...I read, I read the Bible and I do the illustration, illustration by the explanation.⁹³³

In this diglossic context Silas switches register between spoken English, marked as a high speech variety, and his mediated use of Ngaanyatjarra as 'phatic punctuation'.⁹³⁴

We can look back, we can think back to what happened in Warburton long time ago.

We extremely conscious today that our lives are rapidly moving along and will soon be over.⁹³⁵

You know it'll soon be over you know, *wiyarriku, wiyarriku*...

Where are we going?

Wanyijatja?

What is our purpose?

Nyaapa, nyaapaku palyala?

The Bible reminds us that God is gradually drawing us forward to the day when Jesus will return.

Jesus *marlaku pijaku*.

Silas is a fine public orator and deftly shifts between oral and written texts. Yet, his halting prosody (intonation, rhythm and stress) when he is reading reveals that he is not 'consciously reprocessing and translating' written text into a 'spoken medium'.⁹³⁶

The service typically wends its way through a sermon, prayers and Scripture readings and the congregation is invited to share a song or a testimonial. Clem, Samson and others in the band have been singing Gospel since the 1980s Crusades. Hymns are announced from *Turiku pirminya* (Fig. 5.8)—'Can we start with Number 22: *Tjijjalu-rni kanyinma wartangka yitingka?*'—and memorised through iterative singing in church and at home.

Yuwa, our reading this morning is from Luke Chapter 17. And the song we just sang is, you know it means about them people who stood long distance and they watched Jesus, they watched Jesus going into the village...Let us pray: *Mama God*...

The stylised evangelical performance mode of the preachers incorporates reiterated formulaic phrases and paralinguistic elements such as hand waving during gospel singing

⁹³³ Christian texts include the Ngaanyatjarra *New Testament* (Ngaanyatjarra Bible Project 1999), the English *Good News Bible* and the hymnbook *Turiku Pirminya* (Ngaanyatjarra Bible Project 2003).

⁹³⁴ (Kulick 1992: 147). See also (Ferguson 1959; Romaine 1994).

⁹³⁵ This typeface represents text-based speech. His reading is interspersed with utterances comprising explanations and questions.

and the laying on of hands. Affective oral testimonies feature and testify to the transforming power of *Mama* God. In the 'art of testimony' oral narratives are structured around 'before and after sequences': before one's body and social self was 'weak and depleted' and now one is 'strong and purposeful'.⁹³⁷ This aspect can also be traced back to the 1980s Crusades when Christian practice became endowed with a highly transformative element.⁹³⁸

On Sundays Maisie sometimes holds Sunday School classes. Sunday has been 'a special day...for learning and teaching' originating from her time at Mt Margaret Mission where she acquired the habit:

Sundays go to church, 1 o'clock go to Sunday School, Sunday School lesson, answer questions. The Sunday School teacher give us a test, remind, say: 'This is the text you're gonna bring back the next week, the next Sunday and the person who have the right, correct text will get prize.' So we go back with that text and what the person said we...That 'God is love' and we all, we always think: 'Oh what the text was? God is love, God is love.' Sunday, come back Sunday to Sunday School and the teacher says: 'Oh what was your text last week?' Some give the right text and some forget.

Maisie photocopies Scripture and worksheets for her Sunday School activities at the college then takes the texts home to practice in advance. Texts are not read aloud but used as a mnemonic. The Ngaanyatjarra Bible Translation Project provides another role for literates who undertake back translation tasks from Ngaanyatjarra to English. Literates gain a rare opportunity to draft and check extensive texts and produce good final copies. A woman and her adult daughter manage to do a translation at night when the children are asleep, and complete 20 A4 lined pages of English translation with simple one verb sentences and few complex sentences.⁹³⁹

In loving memory of...

Funerals are announced by fax with a regularity that accentuates the high mortality rate among Indigenous people. The 'sad news' is generally communicated by word of mouth, gesture and wailing. However written notices, mediated by the community office, communicate the detail of funerals and second funerals, and send condolences from families unable to attend.⁹⁴⁰ From the mid-1980s communities started establishing cemeteries and funeral rites entered a period of transformation with an increasing Christian

⁹³⁶ (Halliday 1985: 39).

⁹³⁷ (McDonald 2001: 161).

⁹³⁸ (Blackett 1997).

⁹³⁹ (Glass pers. comm. 2004).

⁹⁴⁰ Funeral notices arrive from locations across the tri-state border region of the Western Desert including: Wiluna, Jigalong, Nullagine, Docker River, Amata, Kintore, and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands communities and people often travel long distances to attend to social obligations and responsibilities in the sorry camp and at the funeral.

component.⁹⁴¹ Traditional social organisation remains, nevertheless, the core element in the structuring of funerals:

If it is a Panaka or Yiparrka person who has died, Tjarurru people are the designated ‘workers’, while the Panaka and Yiparrka sections, along with everybody else (i.e. Milangka, Purungu and Karimarra) who occupy the role of ‘mourners’...Although all ‘workers’ at a Panaka/Yiparrka funeral will indeed be Tjarurru, not all Tjarurru will be ‘workers’. Some will be ‘too close’. They will be ‘brothers’ (or ‘sisters’) in kinship terms. ‘Workers’ for a funeral need to be sufficiently distant, genealogically and geographically.⁹⁴²

Protocols at funerals remain important and if rules are broken, e.g. the deceased is buried by the ‘wrong’ or mixed social groupings there are social consequences.⁹⁴³

Within the last five years, as funerals have become more Westernised, a tradition of written eulogies has also emerged (although they are less common in the more traditional smaller communities). The *tilitjartu* or traditional undertakers organise the funeral, and, when available, negotiate and construct the written eulogy handed out at funerals.

The eulogy...will have to be done by *tilitjartu* doing the undertakers’ work...What they do now is they usually...find out from the families when they want the funeral, and they’ll organise through the office...when the funeral is going to be on and send a fax...The *tilitjartu* people have to write the fax, sometimes like they’ll do it, or tell whoever’s in the office, like a whitefella, office worker or whoever to do it. They organise everybody and they make sure with the family that everybody is there, let know who to come...when the coffin actually comes...they’ll come over and get the people and take them over to where the service is going to be...And they’ll do the burial, they’ll go ahead with the body while everybody drives behind and they’ll do the undertakers’ work and after when they do the burial, when families go back and they have to wait for them to finish their work and finish the burial and then the family come and give say ‘exchange’, like in the old days they would give like food or wooden implements or ochre, *kirti*, stone knives or anything like that.⁹⁴⁴

The process of writing funeral texts is communal and brings the sociality of related kin together in textual form.⁹⁴⁵ The order of the funeral service is organised and listed in the text: Bible readings, hymns, and prayers (in English and Ngaanyatjarra). In the funeral eulogy genre we again see the oral ‘travelling narrative’ story schema—the life journey and achievements of the deceased—used as the structuring principle of the written narrative. Older relatives dictate recounts of significant events which literates try and structure into a cohesive written narrative usually in English (and occasionally Ngaanyatjarra). Young people may be the writers, but they defer to their elders to approve the final draft:

That’s a big gap in there. I’ll print it and have a look. They should explain it to us properly so we can write it down, they shouldn’t talk in riddles. Can’t jump from little kid to working straight away. Go and see XX, she’ll know.

⁹⁴¹ Glass outlines the transition from traditional funerals to contemporary funerals now incorporating a Christian element. Second funerals (*manta nyakukitja* – ‘to see the ground’), some 9–15 months after the burial, derive from traditional Ngaanyatjarra practice, but now resemble the form of a ‘memorial service’ (Glass 1997: 36–41).

⁹⁴² (Brooks 2002b: 38–9).

⁹⁴³ (Murray 1979 [1969]-a).

⁹⁴⁴ Marrkilyi E.—Interview 22/1/04

⁹⁴⁵ Albie Viegas pers. comm. 2004.

The list of mourning relations is a key feature of the genre and this has a particular protocol. The affective significance of the text foregrounds the continuing and binding obligation that the *tilitjartu* have to the deceased. The process of negotiating the text can take days: deciding which kin should be listed, in what order (with older siblings, *kurta* and *tjurtu* first) and relationship to the deceased. This is enacted carefully to ensure that no-one is left out and that it is written in the 'right way', irrespective of past grievances. Jokingly writers comment: 'He might get wild and spear me if his name's not there.' Oral memory is used to compile the extensive kinship web, living and deceased, sometimes including up to 200 named relatives or more. Orally Ngaanyatjarra people refer to the deceased from the perspective of the living 'ego', e.g. 'Have you heard the bad news? Rosemary*ku kurri*?' However, looser Aboriginal English kin terms seeping in from the Goldfields have influenced the written form and relatives are identified from the perspective of the deceased, e.g. 'loving uncle of', 'nephew and cousin to'.⁹⁴⁶ Written texts require a genealogical accuracy that younger people, or Goldfields kin, are losing: 'wrong father*ku* name, that's his uncle's name, father's brother's name!'

Some eulogies are simple, handwritten texts that include errors in grammar and spelling. Increasingly, however, eulogy production involves group negotiated composition mediated through a literate person (often non-Aboriginal). Access to computers, and computer literates has led to the production of sophisticated documents inclusive of graphics and occasionally photos of the deceased. The incorporation of photographed images is relatively recent and there is still a reluctance to incorporate images of the deceased into funeral texts. The less literate participate by memorising the order and content of the text and commenting on the layout. The literacy event incorporates a number of key steps: researching key information (e.g. date and place of birth), drafting on paper, typing, redrafting, checking spelling, and cutting and pasting text on screen. Relatives reflect on previous textual productions to ensure that their text honours the status of the deceased and signifies the obligation the family feels toward the deceased. In this way, features of the written genre, including layout and formulaic phrases specific to the genre, are modelled and transmitted.

In summary, funeral texts represent a transformed social practice inclusive of literacy and Western Christian rituals and the public declaration of the name (and occasionally the image of the deceased). These texts are becoming the repository of oral memory and a

⁹⁴⁶ Linda Rive and David Brooks pers comm. 2004.

written record for future generations. Following on from this, on a return visit to Warburton in September 2006, I observed the production of 'memorial plates'. Artists in the Women's Centre are making hand-painted written memorial texts to deceased relatives on glazed ceramic platters as private keepsakes. The embedded text (up to 60-odd words in length) resembles a shorter version of the funeral eulogy genre, inclusive of the listing of mourning relatives, and is similarly imbued with heartfelt grief.

The sports carnival

Young people's time is determined by summer and winter sports—in summer they swim in the pool and play basketball and in winter they play football and softball. Written text is diffused throughout sporting events (Fig. 5.9). Around Easter notices go up at the office announcing the Alice Springs 'Lightning Carnival' which opens the winter sports season all over Central Australia. On late autumn afternoons at Warburton oval some young fellas begin football training, young women do softball training and the band brings amps and instruments down so it can practice. Across Central Australia football teams follow the colour coding of their Australian Football League (AFL) national counterparts. Football colours act as a symbol of community identity and permeate community iconography. Warburton football and softball teams are the 'Tigers' and follow the yellow and black of 'Richmond Tigers'. The affinity with AFL teams encourages people to read for meaning as they keep up with the scores nationally:

I've got people who come round to read newspapers. 'Kenny' stands out because he'll often come round and ask me and he wants to read the sports pages because he wants to know who's on the team, and who's not, for the AFL game and that's a big deal for him and he knows that that's a source of information and he can read well enough so it's worth his while because he could get the same info on TV.⁹⁴⁷

Men take football games seriously and they are well-organised.

For youngfellas it's important to be seen as a player and a *good* player. Even for men who are past it, still important to be involved in football in some minor way or as an organiser...It's like a sense of pride at the beginning of the year: 'Here's your jumper, you're on the team.' And if you're not playing then you need to send your brother, uncle, cousin along in that jumper to play.⁹⁴⁸

Older men write competition programmes and fax notices out to communities all over the region. On one occasion Clem and Mick draft a notice and organise for it to be computer-formatted by an office worker. Ironically, although the written notices are an important element, details often change and are communicated by word of mouth:

⁹⁴⁷ Youth Development Officer—Interview 1/3/04.

⁹⁴⁸ Youth Development Officer—Interview 1/3/04.

In Warburton you won't know when football is on, and then when it's on, it will be lots of people here. It seems that everybody else knows except the staff...They know where the football is...it's usually organised internally... it's not reliant on any sort of support or finance.⁹⁴⁹

Sports carnivals are high mobility events that everyone wants to be at (a football game in Laverton, for example, attracts up to 400 people from the Lands) and incorporate a range of social activities: catching up with relatives, talent quests, car raffles, and music competitions. Older men often use the time to arrange ceremonial Business.⁹⁵⁰ A serious atmosphere pervades football competitions and roles are clearly delineated. The coach counts out 18 players for the team from whoever turns up on the day. Games tend to be scored by older men, an assertion of their literate and moral authority. Scorers organise pens and pads ruled up into elaborate columns and rows for attributing points and goals. The scoring ritual is formalised with special table and chairs, a microphone and loudspeakers.

Unlike football games where older men take a high profile role, with softball young women tend to do it all: 'just the girls do it...we always do it when football festival and practise every Wednesday night'. Louisa's daughter expresses the pride generated by softball:

We always go for football, sports, come back. And we always play softball team...I always tell them: 'Play hard, so we can train for it.'...Sometimes we play basketball. I always tell them to train. We been win them...

At a football carnival in Warburton the main event is the fellas' football game on the grassy oval. Meanwhile on a red dirt pitch nearby, strategically situated next to the playground, young women organise a softball competition. With no fixed starting time and few watches, the players congregate at the pitch simultaneously. The girls know the routine and decisions are made about who will be captain, umpire and player. Each community group nominates their team. Names are written down and columns drawn, listing the nine players, plus two or three 'subs' (substitute players). Darleen writes the names down for her team and is assisted with spelling names and the girls help each other to score. In this collaborative process individuals with less literacy proficiency save face. Naomi and Leah are natural leaders and they organise the game and control the score-sheets. They have the seniority and the skills and there appears to be mutual consent from the group that this is OK. Leah claims that she learned to score by observing the strategies of older players and was 'apprenticed' by the previous cohort.⁹⁵¹ Leah now scores by herself having confidently taken on the role. She draws up her scoresheet with H for 'home' and O for 'out' in the

⁹⁴⁹ Youth Development Officer—Interview 1/3/04.

⁹⁵⁰ See also (Peterson 2000).

⁹⁵¹ (Rogoff et al. 2003).

Fig. 5.9. Sports literacies



5) ^{26.27.} All money to rebuild the Warburton Sporting Club.
 to Wilson + Lavender @ W.

1 All Welcome for
 2 Warburton "Opening Carnival"
 2 All teams to play fee \$500
 4 All funds to even competition \$50.00
 "Talent quest" \$25.00

(3) No Alcohol + Drugs

(6) All welcome, to a part of the special event.
 Any enquiries please contact

 Ladies Softball Competition
 \$50 Entrance fee

Date: 24th, 25th, 26th & 27th June
Activities for the kids

Sports Carnival at Warburton Community

All are welcome

 Battle of the Bands Competition
 \$50 entrance fee

For more information call 08 89567655

NO Alcohol and Drugs

 Talent Quest
 \$25 entrance fee

 Men's Football Competition
 \$50 team entrance fee

All funds raised will go to help rebuild the Warburton Sports Club

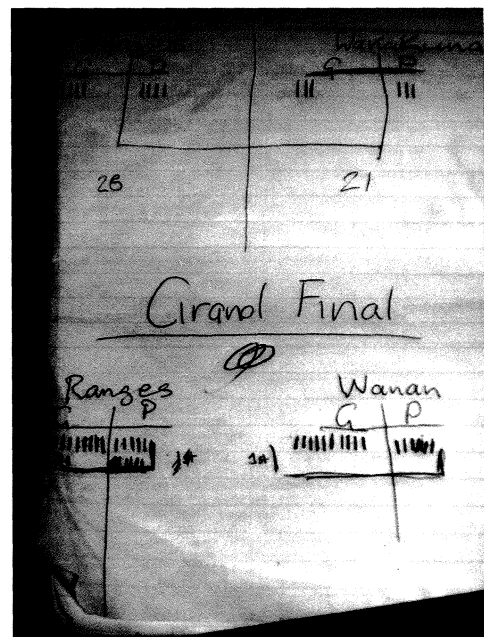
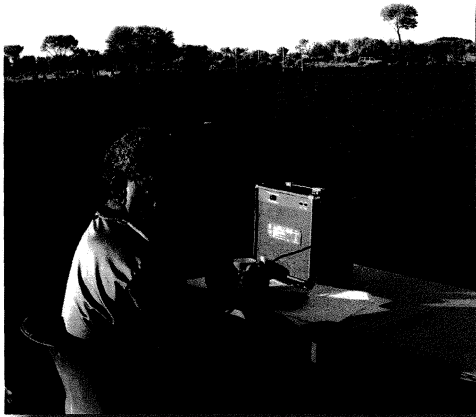
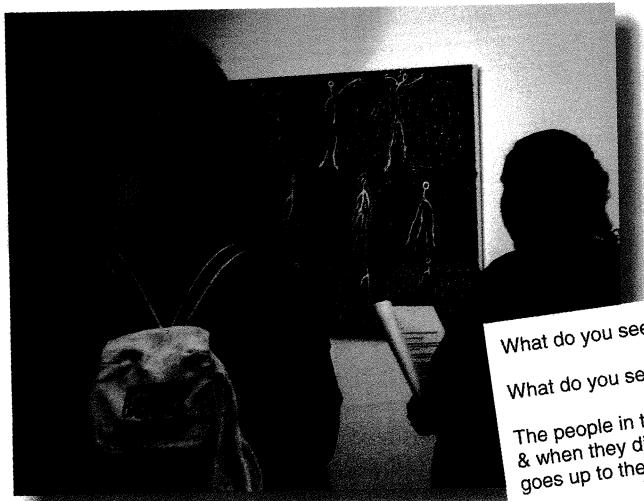


Fig.5.10a-b Speeches

When I started working in the schools I learn't how to teach Ngaanyatjarra language in classrooms with the children and also with Miss Glass and Miss Hackett. When I first learn't it It was really hard so I had to go through slowly and learn't alphabetical order and how to pronounce it .So this book will show the meaning of all the words and how to write them .It really good to have this Picture Dictionary for the Ngaanyatjarra Lands school to show the next generations, for our grandchildren.Also for the adult and older people to learn how to read and write in their own language . We already got our language, we speak it , but it's good to know how to read it .I want to thank Ameer and Dorothy Hackett and also Kazuko and Mrs Paget and Pam Collier for helping me with the Picture Dictionary. And also a very special thankyou to for her effort in getting the Picture Dictionary finished was'nt for Inge this book would'nt be here today. also thank you to the I.A.D. for publishing this book

(a)



Painting: Tjukurpa Yilkari-manta and Manta Kaninytjarra by Dorothy Ward.

(b)

What do you see in this painting in the 3 different sections?

What do you see in each section?

The people in the picture in the middle section they live there & when they die they go underground and their spirit *kuurti* goes up to the sky.

Sort of like our dreamtime and the 3 section are sky - *yilkari*, land - *manta* and underground - *manta kaninytjarra*.

Whitefellas see nothing, just the land, searching for *yapu* rock The *yamangu* it's already claimed - the sky the land & the underground, the spirits - the *yamangu* from the early days are already all round all 3 sections. They live there in all the rockholes, caves, and everywhere.

Those whitefellas comes in to land with their agreements for the *yamangu* to sign up to give away their spiritual land, all 3 sections together to the whitefellas.

innings columns marked against a corresponding list of players' names. Score-sheets are looked after carefully over the three days, scores are tallied for all games and the two teams with the highest scores play the grand final.

Team sports such as football, softball and basketball offer sites for 'situated learning'. Heath and Langman suggest that unrecognised learning events are embedded in sport and coaching events; players learn the 'role of rules' to regulate group interaction for which all members hold responsibility and these sustain 'the essentials of group collaboration as well as individual knowledge and skill development'.⁹⁵² These observations are also relevant in the Ngaanyatjarra context where team sports are usually mediated without non-Aboriginal support, and the girls demonstrate 'peer coaching' skills. The participants code-mix between English and Ngaanyatjarra and use 'role differentiated registers' to call out instructions and interact with spectators and players.⁹⁵³ Leah confidently uses an instructional mode, uttering commands, using negatives, conditionals, hypotheticals and superlatives and mathematical concepts (sequencing, ordering and counting). Through team sports participants learn, observe, trust their judgement and have ownership. Umpires and scorers know the rules of the game, maintain concentration, and integrate textual elements into practice. They also develop discipline, decision-making, time management and organisational skills.

The winter sports season continues until the football grand final is played and the winners return with victory trophies. As the heat of the summer takes over these sports take a lower profile and adolescents congregate once more around the basketball court while the community focus returns to the summer cycle of Law Business.

Community events

Other community events provide arenas for adults to assume literate roles: workshops (health, nutrition, youth, sexual health, cultural awareness), exhibitions, arts education programmes and music festivals.⁹⁵⁴ Exhibition openings and book launches, in particular, are textually mediated ritual speech events. Opening speeches, often in English, follow Western oratorical conventions. For instance, Silas opens the mining exhibition '*Trust*' in Kalgoorlie by reading a formulaic opening phrase from a co-authored written script:

⁹⁵² (Heath and Langman 1994: 87).

⁹⁵³ (Heath and Langman 1994).

⁹⁵⁴ In a catalogue from a 2002 exhibition of the Mirlirtjarra Ceramics (von Sturmer 2002), the Ngaanyatjarra manager highlights the design motifs on ceramics in her text: 'This is our story about Warburton Ceramics Centre. We started it for the young ladies. Their minds click for designs. The ladies come out every day, share their giggles. They work for their

Prime Minister, Mr Howard, Barry Hasse, Mayor Yurevich and distinguished guests.
My name is 'Silas'. I am from Warburton community. I am a Ngaanyatjarra man.

His closure is, however, an oral improvisation:

I have the privilege to be standing here, not only representing the Ngaanyatjarra Lands but for my black people throughout Australia.
Thank you

Patricia's speech for the launch of the *Ngaanyatjarra Picture Dictionary* is also co-authored. Not satisfied with the tone of the first draft, Patricia rewrites it by hand, then on computer. Patricia has assisted in compiling the dictionary and her speech embodies the significance of Ngaanyatjarra literacy in her life (Fig. 5.10a).

Exhibitions are also textually mediated events. In the past, stories of earlier generations were transmitted orally, now recent social history is being documented in acrylic painting, exhibition catalogues and, as I discuss earlier, funeral eulogies.⁹⁵⁵ Through these forms a collective written historical narrative is being collated, as exemplified in Una's response to the *Mission time in Warburton* exhibition:

I went one day and had a look and there was my grandfather's story, going down to Laverton. That's in that Cultural Centre there...Ooooh, I was really proud to read about my grandfather...I used to visit him...he must have been something like 90 years old. I was really happy to see that little story written down about my grandfather.

Exhibitions also incorporate banners, posters, t-shirts, and stories re-rendered as gallery notes for tour guiding or arts education activities (Fig. 5.10b). Paintings are signed with names, initials, a cross, or a 'squiggle' (i.e. an iconic representation of a cursive signature). Alphabetic text has also been incorporated into acrylic paintings and ceramics, and a signature 'ideograph' has been interwoven into an entire canvas by one artist.⁹⁵⁶

Conclusion

By using ethnography to trace the rhythms and patterns of community life I show that although literacy may not yet be normative practice across the whole Ngaanyatjarra populace, habits of reading and to a lesser extent writing are now second nature for around

own living, for their childrens. We like to share our little messages. Th[is] is our first time to have an exhibition, Year 2002. This story is true.' See: <http://www.warburtonarts.com/site/ceramics.php>

⁹⁵⁵ The Warburton Arts Project collection has been exhibited nationally and internationally and exhibitions documented in catalogues including: (Plant and Viegas 2002; Turner 2003; Warburton Arts Project 1993; Warburton Arts Project 1999) Paintings and objects are lodged in the Warburton Community Arts Collection.

⁹⁵⁶ See for example: Tjingapa Davies—*Right way to have a kurri* (1992), and Elizabeth Holland and Christine West—*All the early days rockholes* (2001) (Warburton Arts Project 1999). Warburton Arts Project also holds a painting by Pulpuru Davies—*Sandhills and Signature* (2004), and June Richards has done a series of paintings by (2006) where text covers the entire canvas.

one-third of the group. I show that according to certain indicators of competence varying levels of literacy competence exist, yet I suggest that such decontextualised measures reveal little about how people use literacy in everyday life and tend to support only dominant institutional literacy practices. By delineating benchmarks of competence, some people may be categorised illiterate irrespective of their literate behaviours, values and habits, and the 'non-standard' literacies which exist in their everyday lives.

Clearly, most Ngaanyatjarra are oblivious of the high order literacy processes and practices of the literate middle-class Anglo-European world. After all, with such short exposure to literacy and bounded by their narrow literacy experience, adults are only 'as literate as the tasks required'.⁹⁵⁷ Most literacy requirements are met either by an individual's own proficiency, mediated by networks of support, or literate processes are disregarded altogether.⁹⁵⁸ Reading events outnumber writing, and most literacy events tend to be in English, although Ngaanyatjarra texts prevail in the Christian domain. There are, however, situations where people do need literacy. In particular the administrative literacies required for interactions with the justice systems and in governance domains. The key is in finding an articulation between these domains. Literacy issues will not be ameliorated by more technical skills literacy training if policies and practices do not also take account of the sociocultural reality in the remote Aboriginal context. Processes also need to be found to ensure that more Aboriginal people have control over the administration of their personal affairs, and the language and literacy tools to engage in public affairs. Undoubtedly, literacy is being learned in school, however if there is 'no integral use' for what has been taught, this literacy will begin to 'atrophy'.⁹⁵⁹ Literacy practice is, I argue, contingent upon participation, and only becomes relevant when embedded in meaningful roles, identities and contexts of use.

⁹⁵⁷ (Clanchy 1979: 219).

⁹⁵⁸ (Barton and Hamilton 1998: 230; Barton and Padmore 1994).

⁹⁵⁹ (Street 1984: 190).