AIATSIS

STRONGER TOGETHER

Perspectives from the Australian Languages Workshop 2024

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First published in 2026 by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Centre for Australian Languages

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Design and typesetting by: Duncan Blachford, Typography Studio
Cover image: Group photo of ALW delegates at the Cotter Dam, Ngunnawal Country.
Photographs: Nathan Dukes, This is Creative

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Cataloguing data

This publication should be attributed as: Leslie-O'Neill, H., Davey, K., and Mount, A. L. (2026). Stronger together: Perspectives from the Australian Languages Workshop 2024. AIATSIS Research Publications.

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ISBN: 9780855752996

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Warning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are respectfully advised that this publication may contain names, images and quotations of deceased persons.

Acknowledgements

The AIATSIS Centre for Australian Languages (ACAL) thanks all presenters and attendees for their invaluable contributions to the 2024 Australian Languages Workshop. ACAL also thanks the Australian National University for their support in co-hosting the workshop, Keira Mullan and Ella Haber for recording notes of each presentation throughout the workshop, Ruben Thompson for assisting in editing this report, and Auslan interpreters Rowner Fuifui, Mark Sandon and Mark Ethan. Approval was gained for the inclusion of all delegates' names, quotes, and photos.

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Introduction

On 20–22 September 2024, over 80 language workers and researchers from around Australia came together on Ngunnawal Country to discuss their language projects and research at the Australian Languages Workshop. This workshop was co-hosted by AIATSIS and the Australian National University at Camp Cottermouth, just outside Canberra and overlooking the Murrumbidgee River. The theme of the symposium was the Blak Auslan sign country.



Figure 1: This image depicts a woman signing COUNTRY, a Blak Auslan word. Artwork by Olivia Beasley, Livi Creations Studio.

Delegates at the workshop came from a diverse range of language ecologies: representing spoken and signed languages, traditional and contact languages, languages where children are still acquiring the language from birth, and languages which people are relearning after a period of it not being spoken. Seven key themes emerged from the 26 presentations and workshops across the weekend:

- The value of combining living knowledges and resting knowledges
- Challenges in accessing archival materials
- Tensions between Indigenous law/lore and Western law
- The immense diversity of traditional and contemporary Indigenous languages
- Connections and relationships between Indigenous languages
- Exciting innovations in Indigenous language education
- The importance of collaboration in language strengthening projects.

This report draws from perspectives shared in each talk, platforming these diverse voices of Indigenous language experts from across Australia.

About the workshop

The Australian Languages Workshop (ALW) is an annual event that brings together people working on any aspect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. ALW is renowned as a collaborative forum where attendees can share their research, discuss language projects, and address achievements and challenges in their work.

The origins of ALW can be traced back to a gathering of 'Australianist' linguistics PhD students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1979. Later, in Australia, ALW evolved into its current form as an informal forum for knowledge exchange, collaboration and community building among those working on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. It has been an annual highlight of the Australian linguistics calendar since 1993 and has become increasingly focused on prioritising community-led research.

Presentations span a range of topics, including language documentation and analysis; language maintenance, revitalisation and reclamation; language education; language policy; language data, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and copyright; and interpreting and translation. The workshop-style nature of the event allows for discussions of ongoing work and emerging ideas, which sets ALW apart from more formal academic conferences.

ALW 2024 brought together over 80 people in dialogue over three days, including:

- community linguists and language workers from Western Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland, New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, and Victoria (figure 2)
- representatives from language centres and language stakeholder organisations (table 1)
- academics, researchers, and students engaged in research on Australian Indigenous languages (table 2)
- federal and state government representatives (table 2)

The workshop consisted of 23 presentations that underwent a double-blind peer-review process. There was also a legal workshop by the National Indigenous Australians Agency, a presentation by the Office for the Arts, and a presentation by the National Library of Australia. Delegates were welcomed to Country by Ngunnawal Elder and then AIATSIS Deputy CEO Jude Barlow, and a cultural site visit to Cotter Dam led by Ngunawal Elder Wally Bell.

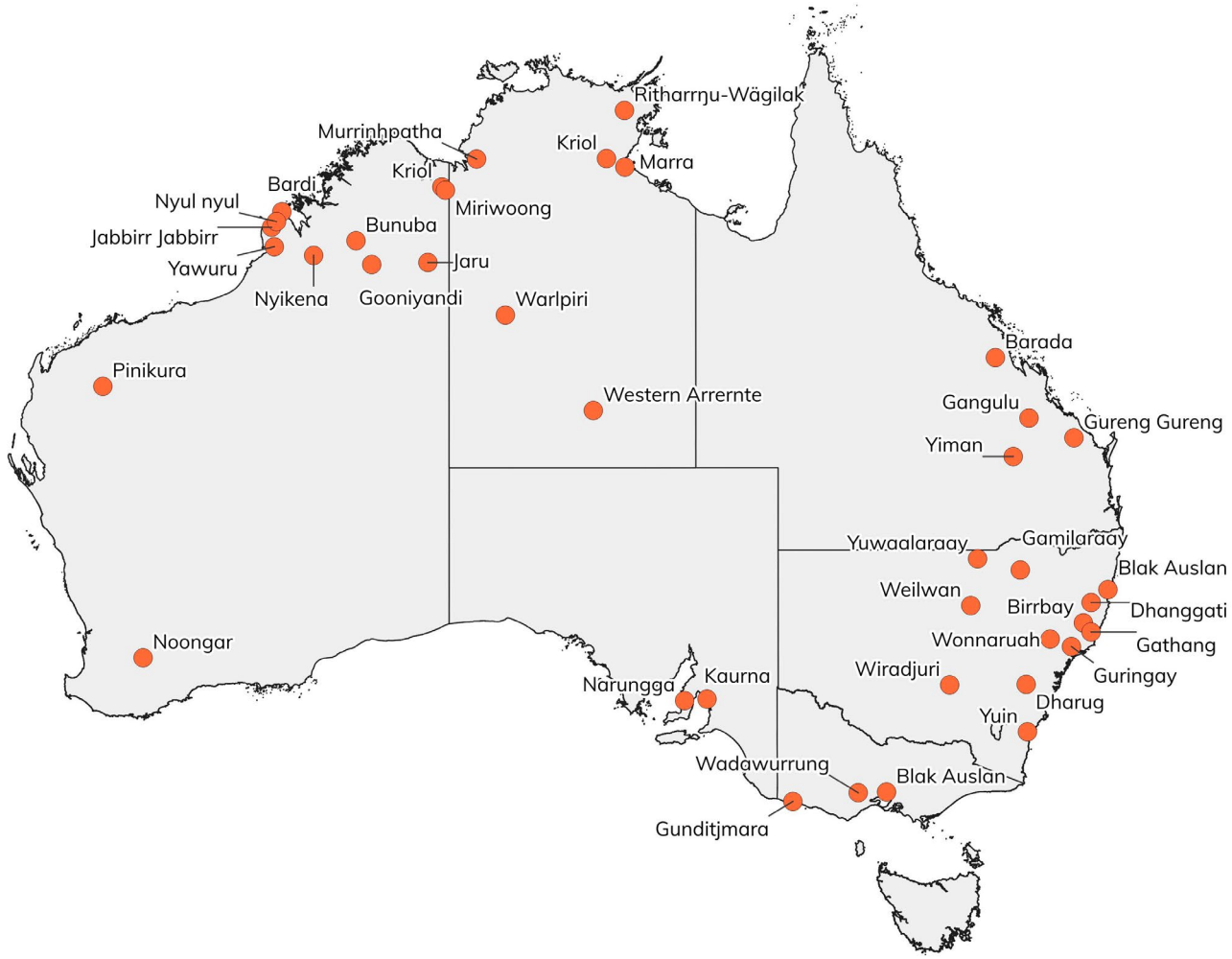


Figure 2: Languages represented by presenters and sponsored delegates at the 2024 Australia Languages Workshop. Attendees from other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language groups may have attended the event. Points are approximate only.[1]

1. AIATSIS 2022, 'AustLang'. Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/70132e6f-259c-4e0f-9f95-4aed1101c053.

Table 1: Delegates – Language centres and other organisations

Dharug Dhalang working group
Deaf Aboriginal Services
Kimberley Language Resource Centre
Language Data Commons of Australia
Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre
Museums of History NSW
Ngukurr Language Centre
Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura Peoples Aboriginal Corporation
Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages
Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
Warlpiri Education and Training Trust
Winanga-Li Aboriginal Child & Family Centre

Table 2: Delegates – Tertiary institutions and government

Tertiary Institutions	Government
Australian National University (ACT)	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)
Charles Sturt University (NSW)	Office for the Arts, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
La Trobe University (Vic)	National Indigenous Australians Agency
Macquarie University (NSW)	National Library of Australia
University of Melbourne (Vic)	Northern Territory Department of Education and Training

Perspectives from the workshop

Summary

Delegates at the workshop presented on a range of findings, issues and innovations related to their language work and research. Our qualitative analysis of the 26 presentations revealed seven important themes threaded throughout the workshop.

The first theme – *Living knowledges and resting knowledges* – speaks to the opportunities in the integration of resting knowledges that have been recorded and are held in archives with living knowledges that have been passed down orally and are held by living people. The second theme – *Archives and accessibility* – digs deeper into the current state of such Indigenous language archives, which can be challenging to access and which need to implement better protocols based on Indigenous cultural principles.

Indigenous researchers and activists are driving change across Australia by sharing their perspectives and standing up for their rights. The third theme – *Language, law and policy* – considers tensions between Indigenous law/lore and Western law, and how the government is listening to Indigenous language experts to develop better policies supporting Indigenous languages.

The diversity of Indigenous languages and communities is immense, and there needs to be both comprehensive national policy and tailored community-level action to support contemporary and traditional Indigenous languages. Contemporary Indigenous languages, such as Kriol and Blak Auslan, reflect innovations in an ever-changing world and require more support to ensure their strength into the future, as discussed in the fourth theme – *Contemporary diversity*. Hand in hand with their diversity, there are also abundant relationships between Indigenous languages which reflect shared histories between communities, as discussed in the fifth theme – *Connections across languages*.

Indigenous educators and language specialists are innovatively integrating cutting-edge global research with traditional knowledges and community-based experience to empower the next generations of language speakers. As celebrated in the sixth theme – *Innovation in education* – Indigenous educators are seeing incredible results from their unique approaches to teaching Indigenous languages, tailored to their local communities. More support for these programs would see them flourish even further. Finally, as discussed in the seventh theme – *Working together makes us stronger* – Indigenous language specialists resoundingly agree that collaboration between diverse stakeholders, and across generations, is an essential component of successful language strengthening efforts.

> *"We can't have culture without language and vice versa and if we do not have this we can't connect with community and with Country. We are lost! We got to move quickly as we are losing our elders and carriers of language."* – Merrilee Lands, Yawuru teacher and author.[2]

2. Merrilee Lands was interviewed as part of the Kimberley Language Resource Centre's Language Continuation Project, presented at the workshop.

Living knowledges and resting knowledges

There are living knowledges and resting knowledges of Indigenous languages and cultures. Living knowledges are passed down orally through generations, as they have been for over 60,000 years. Resting knowledges have been recorded in writing and audio recordings which are now cared for in archives or by individuals across Australia. Drawing on both sources of knowledge can lead to highly impactful work.

For example, Gari Tudor-Smith – a Barada, Yiman, Gangulu and Gureng Gureng linguist – and Thomas Watson – a Gangulu, Garingbal, Wadja, and Gureng Gureng linguist – integrated archival documentation of their languages with living knowledge held by their Elders to refine our understandings of languages across central Queensland. Gari recalls an Elder correcting a miscategorisation of an old recording: "*When we were up in Woorabinda last year, we were sitting at our old Aunty's house, and we were talking about some of the audio from an old speaker [who was listed as Gangulu]. And our Aunty goes, 'She's not Gangulu, she's from up in Nebo [from a different language group]!*"

Drawing on both living and resting knowledges requires balancing insider and outsider perspectives on a language. Researchers use the terms *etic* and *emic* to describe where a particular perspective is coming from. Etic perspectives are those coming from an outsider, such as a non-Indigenous linguist describing an Indigenous language. Emic perspectives come from an insider, such as an Indigenous linguist working on their own language(s). Traditional research has heavily prioritised etic perspectives. However, a growing body of emic research is challenging and expanding our current understandings of language.

Did you know?

Many Indigenous language names along the east coast of Australia, and elsewhere, use what are known as 'shibboleths' to identify the language. A shibboleth is a word that distinguishes speakers of one language from another. The term is based on a biblical story where the Hebrew word 'shibboleth' was used to distinguish two peoples: one group who pronounced it as 'shibboleth', and another who pronounced it as 'sibboleth'.

Gari and Thomas shared that many language communities use their unique word for 'no' to name themselves, especially across the east of Australia. For example, *gangu* means 'no' in Gangulu, *gamil* means 'no' in Gamilaraay, and *yorta* means 'no' in Yorta Yorta. These names represent local emic knowledge of distinctions between communities and languages, which may be lost or misrepresented when non-Indigenous researchers develop etic names for communities and languages.

Researchers have been investigating how speakers talk about space and location in the Murrinhpatha language of the Northern Territory. They began by using experimental techniques wherein two participants are separated by a screen. One person is shown a scene to describe to the other person, so that the other person can recreate the same scene, without being able to see each other or their gestures. The results of this experiment were inconclusive. Researchers quickly realised this was likely because the experiment did not reflect real language use, as it did not account for factors like gesture and orientation on Country.

More recently, Murrinhpatha and non-Indigenous researchers sat down with Murrinhpatha speakers on Country, listening to stories told by Elders while recording the words and gestures they used in this more realistic context. This helped them to develop a richer emic understanding of the language. They found that Murrinhpatha grammar – the structure of the language itself – is deeply connected to Country. Non-Indigenous linguist Joe Blythe states: "*Murrinhpatha forces us to confront the multimodal nature of grammar. Grammar is not just about what we say. It also encodes where we are looking and how we are positioned in space.*"

To better understand and protect living knowledges, a team of Aboriginal language workers at the Kimberley Language Resource Centre (KLRC) are interviewing people from communities all across the Kimberley. This also requires balancing etic and emic perspectives: using large-scale survey techniques to get a comprehensive overview of the state of languages in the Kimberley, while also interviewing community members to develop a richer understanding of their diverse perspectives and experiences. Rhys Collard – KLRC project manager and Noongar man – states that "the survey was led by local Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people", and that "focusing on the words and lived experiences of each person interviewed" was "at the core of the survey". One interviewee, Yawuru woman Anita Jo Dean, emphasised that Indigenous Elders are the most valuable sources of knowledge: "*All our old people are our libraries... We need to get it back and teach all our kids so then they've got a sense of belonging and who they are, where they come from and where they're heading.*"

The perspectives of outsider researchers, such as non-Indigenous people researching Indigenous languages, have historically been valued more than the perspectives of the people being researched. Today, Indigenous people are increasingly researching their own languages and proving the immense value of insider perspectives – drawn from both living and resting knowledges – in developing rich and accurate understandings of language.



Figure 3: Ben Foley from the Language Data Commons of Australia (LDaCA) presenting about the management of language data collections

Archives and accessibility

Drawing on resting knowledges in archives requires that those archives are accessible to community members and researchers. Yet many archives that hold Indigenous knowledges are highly challenging to access due to problematic collecting practices, a lack of metadata[3] describing materials, or a lack of training and support for people trying to access the collections. Collecting institutions need to develop culturally safe protocols with Indigenous custodians, especially around accessibility, ownership, and repatriation.

The National Library of Australia (NLA) holds a large collection of Indigenous language and cultural materials. But due to inadequate metadata, searching their collection to find relevant materials is challenging. Rebecca Bateman – a Gamilaraay and Wayilwan woman from the NLA Indigenous Engagement team – shares: "*We've had, over the years, a lot of different approaches both to collecting and giving access, particularly when it comes to First Nations material … We'll put up our hands and own it, we don't always know what we've got. What we are doing is working really, really hard to correct that.*"

Did you know?

The NLA team shared that if you lined up the NLA's entire collection on one long shelf, it would stretch 274 kilometres! They hold millions of books, millions of photos, tens of thousands of oral histories, 2 million maps, and over 2.5 million gigabytes of digital materials.

Sometimes random discoveries of previously unanalysed language materials in archives can contribute in big ways to language revitalisation projects. David Nash discussed the discovery of a small piece of paper, sitting within a book by a different author, which contained a paragraph of untranslated Wiradjuri language. This was worked out to be a sermon, written by Rev. William Watson in the 1800s, and has since led to new insights concerning the use and grammatical features of 19th century Wiradjuri.

In a series of interviews coordinated by the Language Data Commons of Australia (LDaCA), Indigenous language practitioners agreed that accessing language materials – or even discovering the existence of language materials – is a huge barrier for their work. Because searching archives is so challenging, Indigenous researchers often have to rely on their own connections with other researchers and community members to uncover resources on their languages. One interviewee stated that "*for language resources that are readily available, the easiest way that we found them was by knowing other blackfullas basically.*"

This can lead to frustration when Indigenous people discover language materials for their languages that no one in their community knew about. Another interviewee stated: "*I get really emotional when I hear about somebody finding [language materials] by accident. That was there all the time that nobody ever knew about and I get angry, and I get frustrated. And I think to myself: 'How much more of our history and our knowledges is out there that we've not seen?'*" Interviewees agreed that there should be more training to support Indigenous people accessing archives, and that collecting institutions need to find a balance between protecting language materials and providing access to language custodians.

3. Metadata refers to information about a particular material in a collection. Metadata includes information like title, author, date, language, region, topic, and so on. This metadata is necessary to facilitate searching the collection and identifying materials that may be relevant.

The balance between protecting and providing access to archives was a common thread at the workshop. Consultations conducted by the Aboriginal Languages Trust NSW found that communities want local access to archives and artefacts, with care and access protocols developed by cultural custodians. It is also important to have trauma-informed support available for Indigenous people accessing archival materials. Gulwanyang Moran – a Birrbay and Dhanggati woman and manager of First Nations Community Access to Archives at Museums of History NSW – argued for increased accessibility through digitisation: "*Most of us mob don't want the colonial paper-based archive materials, just high-quality digitised copies of them – we want to be able to access the information widely and use it for our language and cultural revitalisation efforts.*" From access, comes action: the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura Peoples Aboriginal Corporation (PKKP) language team state that "*Documentation alone cannot achieve the dreams our community has for their languages.*"



Figure 4: Attendees listening to a talk from PKKP

The NLA and LDaCA both spoke about their efforts to make their archives more accessible. Rebecca Bateman from the NLA stated: "*We want you to know that [the collection] is yours and that you can access it and we can help you to do that. And we want you to know that it is cared for.*" Ben Foley from LDaCA stated: "*We are working on ways that language communities can hold their own collections.*" With a similar goal – distributing collections to be held by community – the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages have developed Ngarrwaa,[4] a First Peoples owned and managed online library where language groups can set up private secure online spaces to work on and store language materials.

4. Ngarrwaa comes from the Gulidjan language, meaning 'a special place of conversation and deep listening and the belief of the balance of the two'. Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages. *Ngarrwaa*. https://library.vacl.org.au/

Many archives are labelled under the collector or depositor's name which can obscure what languages are recorded within them, like the RH Mathews papers which have thousands of handwritten notes about languages all the way from New South Wales to Cape York. These papers are now being digitised and transcribed, so that they can be used in research and shared with community members. Access conditions for language collections are also typically set by the collector or depositor, rather than the community or knowledge holders. One solution to these challenges is to base collections around the knowledge holder instead: such as the Veronica Dobson collection, which holds a range of videos, recordings, information and language shared by Eastern Arrernte Elder Veronica Dobson. "*It is about centring the knowledge holder*," states Ben Foley from LDaCA.

Many digital archives are at risk of being lost or made inaccessible due to technical difficulties. With changing technologies, some data formats can become unusable after just decades, and media like language apps or language groups on social media can easily become lost or inaccessible without warning. Gina Bundle – a Djiringanj Walbunja woman – discussed traditional practices of passing on knowledge between families and down through generations using storytelling, imagery, and language. Gina shared how she collaboratively created a possum-skin cloak while travelling Victoria with the Treaty Commission. Representatives from tribal groups across Victoria contributed designs, which were etched onto the 288 skins that make up the cloak.[5] With language, artwork, and stories embedded on each skin, the cloak became a physical archive in its own right, to protect and share the story of the treaty process into the future. Combining contemporary technology with traditional cultural practice and knowledge is one way to strengthen the sustainability of Indigenous archives into the future.



Figure 5: Odee Welsh and others in the audience.

5. Photos and information about the cloak are available at this link: https://www.sbs.com.au/language/nitv-radio/en/podcast-episode/victorias-treaty-possum-skin-cloak-a-piece-of-art-and-historical-document-wrapped-in-one/72k9vwvf9

Language, law and policy

These tensions in archival practices reflect broader tensions at the intersections between Indigenous law/lore and Western law. Because Australian law comes from a Western tradition, it is more closely aligned with Western rights and responsibilities than Indigenous rights and responsibilities. Therefore, many actions that are unethical under Indigenous law/lore remain legal under Australian law, and vice versa.

Tom Allen – Principal Lawyer at the National Indigenous Australians Agency – describes the gap between Western law and Indigenous cultural protocols: "*There is sometimes overlap, but sometimes total incongruence between the law and what community would expect. When the law talks about intellectual property it talks about things like ownership, property rights, individuals, licenses, money, fair use. And they don't easily always translate into concepts like obligation, custodianship, or the subtle and ongoing processes of consent, and reaffirming those relationships. … Communal ownership is very different to the Western-based individual copyright. That's a big difference.*"



Figure 6: Denise Angelo and others in the audience.

As Tom Allen explains, Australian laws protect some but not all Indigenous cultural heritage rights.[6] A more complete set of Indigenous people's rights over their cultural heritage are recognised by the United Nations[7] and enshrined in law in some countries such as Canada.[8] The Australian Government is currently working towards better protecting Indigenous cultural heritage rights.[9]

Copyright law, then, is the main structure that can protect Indigenous cultural heritage in Australia. However this can also lead to complex and undesirable outcomes. For example, copyright typically goes to the person making the recording of songs or language rather than to the singer or speaker. That means the person who makes the recording, often a non-Indigenous researcher, gets to choose what happens with the recording and who is allowed access to it. One way researchers and communities can remedy this in the future is by signing a contract which specifies that copyright will instead be held by the speaker or a community organisation.

Similar issues can arise in the development of dictionaries and other language materials. In Australia, copyright only protects 'material works', such as books, recordings, or artworks. Copyright does not protect 'ideas', which includes languages and other cultural knowledge. Therefore, while a dictionary itself is protected by copyright, the language information inside it is not. Copyright law does not define who can do what with that language knowledge. Tom Allen summarises that "*in a colonial world, where groups are attempting to assert sovereignty over their language, this tension [around what copyright does and does not protect] is challenging and uncomfortable.*"

6. Also known as ICIP – Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property.
7. United Nations General Assembly. (2007). *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (A/RES/61/295). United Nations. https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/un-declaration-rights-indigenous-people.
8. Bill C-15, *An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd Sess, 43rd Parl, 2021. https://www.parl.ca/LegisInfo/en/bill/43-2/C-15.
9. This was announced as part of the 2023 National Cultural Policy plan which, among other goals, will introduce "stand-alone legislation to recognise and protect First Nations traditional knowledge and cultural expressions, including addressing the harm caused by fake art, merchandise and souvenirs." Commonwealth of Australia. (2023). *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place – Australia's cultural policy for the next five years.* https://www.arts.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/national-culturalpolicy-8february2023.pdf

Representatives from the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation discussed how they grapple with these tensions in practice. They regularly receive requests to provide Wadawurrung names for places, buildings, organisations, and other public uses of language. To protect their language and culture from misuse, they have developed a 'Cultural Credit Check' protocol to determine whether the client aligns with Wadawurrung values, has a history of meaningful engagement with Wadawurrung people, and demonstrates cultural respect. On providing language to a client, they draw up and sign an official agreement that defines how the language may be used. These practices help to ensure Wadawurrung language is respected and protected according to Wadawurrung protocols.

Did you know?

Outcome 16 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap is that "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing" with the target of having a "sustained increase in number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken" by 2031. To better achieve the targets of Closing the Gap, in 2019 a partnership between governments and the Coalition of Peaks identified four priority reform areas:

1. Increasing formal partnerships and shared decision-making with Indigenous groups
2. Building the community-controlled sector
3. Transforming government organisations to improve accountability and respond to the needs of Indigenous people
4. Facilitating shared access to data and information at a regional level.

Five policy partnerships were established under the National Agreement to identify opportunities to work more effectively across governments, reduce gaps and duplication, and improve outcomes under Closing the Gap. One of these partnerships, the Languages Policy Partnership (LPP), is a committee of representatives from Indigenous community-controlled organisations, Indigenous language experts, and government representatives working to drive progress against Outcome 16 – that languages are strong, supported and flourishing. The policy partnerships ensure that Indigenous communities and experts from all across Australia are central in informing government policies and ensuring that they are better aligned with local community priorities. Jake Budd – Assistant Secretary at the Office for the Arts – shared his appreciation for the work of the LPP: "*I want to acknowledge the LPP itself, the members. If it weren't for their leadership and drive in sometimes challenging conversations with us, we wouldn't be seeing the kind of movement we are. Attitudes are shifting, and the door is open now.*"

Despite this progress, delegates at the workshop shared concerns that many languages and communities across Australia still lack the support they need. Delegates highlighted a lack of support for Indigenous sign languages, for contemporary Indigenous languages like Kriol and Yumplatok, and for grassroots language work that is not associated with a registered language organisation. As seen in the discussions on archives, this reflects a greater tension between national and community-level engagement. How can national institutions and policies respect the immense diversity of Indigenous communities and languages across the continent?[10]

10. This challenge was discussed in depth at the 2022 Language Policy Symposium. Read more in the report: Reed, L. W., Mount, A. L., & Angelo, D. (2024), *Strengthening Australian languages: between policy and practice*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra. https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/research_pub/Language%20Policy%20Symposium%20report.pdf.

Contemporary diversity

Indigenous people and Indigenous languages have adapted to the rapidly changing world, since colonisation and into the 21st century. Contemporary Indigenous languages that have developed in this time are diverse and growing; from new ways of speaking traditional languages, to contact languages like Kriol and Yumplatok, to Indigenous ways of signing Auslan.

Many Indigenous communities across Australia use sign languages for communication. Some communities might just use a few hand signs, while others can hold full conversations in sign. Traditional Indigenous sign languages, just like spoken languages, have been severely impacted by colonisation. One way that Indigenous people are carrying on their traditions is through an Indigenous variety of Auslan, called Blak Auslan. Similar to how Aboriginal English is an Indigenous form of English, Blak Auslan is a form of Auslan influenced by the cultural practices and knowledges of Indigenous signers.



Figure 7: Rodney Adams and Joanna Agius discussing Blak Auslan.

A team of Deaf Indigenous researchers and activists shared some of the Blak Auslan signs that they use in conversation. Joanna Agius – a Deaf Narungga woman – explains how standard Auslan signs are not always comfortable for Indigenous signers: "*There's a colonised sign for 'Australia'. When the Brits came to Australia, the Deaf community would sign this sign [for Australia], meaning 'pick up the convicts and dump them into this country'. And I'm like 'Oh my goodness!'. Say for example, I'm like 'Hey! I'm Jo. And I'm from pick-up-and-dump!' No, no, no. My family history isn't a convict.*"[11] To resolve this issue, a small group of Deaf Indigenous community members developed a new sign for Australia, using a hand to portray the shape of Australia, a motion depicting the oceans surrounding the continent, and a fist to represent Uluṟu.[12] *Joanna continues: "So we thought 'That's culturally appropriate. We need to utilise this this sign for Australia!'. But the Deaf non-Indigenous community are saying 'You can't use that sign, you need to follow the colonised sign'. And I'm like 'No we don't! Leave our Deaf Aboriginal mob alone. We're fitting into our culture, and these are the signs that we're producing.'"*

The team also shared the Blak Auslan sign COUNTRY which is depicted in Figure 1. Rather than the standard Auslan sign which connotes a country as an (often) overseas nation, a political area with borders, the Blak Auslan sign foregrounds connection to Country as the actual land itself. Joanna explains: "*We're focusing on where you are on the land within Australia, and the Country where you stand.*"

11. Joanna's quotes were signed in Blak Auslan and translated into English by an interpreter.
12. This sign is featured in a clip from the ABC program *The Drum. New Auslan sign to acknowledge Indigenous history* (2021), Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Sydney. https://www.facebook.com/abcthedrum/videos/996297341146673/.

Did you know?

Deaf people are often disadvantaged, growing up in a world that expects and presumes the ability to hear. This is called 'audism': discrimination against people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. This discrimination can be compounded for Deaf Indigenous people, for whom audism and racism intersect.

A 2018–2019 study found that around 43% of Indigenous people had some degree of hearing loss.[13] This can impact on how people can engage with their languages and cultures, especially for children. Deaf Indigenous children can be isolated in various ways: from their own culture if their parents can't sign, from adequate support if they live in remote communities, from Indigenous peers if they are sent to the majority-white Deaf boarding schools, or from the broader Auslan community if their Blak Auslan variety isn't accepted. Providing better access to learning sign languages would improve Deaf Indigenous children's connections to language, culture, and community.

The contemporary diversity of Indigenous languages is often under-recognised, under-appreciated and under-supported. Representatives from the Ngukurr language centre discussed the challenges they face trying to support more than ten different languages, all with limited funding and limited staff. Charlee Horni – the non-Indigenous coordinator at Ngukurr – shared: *"It's hard to give time and energy to all the languages that we are trying to support. We have a lot of [local Indigenous] people who are interested in working as language workers but we don't have a lot of the support staff."*



Figure 8: Gulwanyang Moran listening to a presentation

Through the efforts and creative innovations of community members, recognition of contemporary language diversity is growing. Researchers Mahesh White-Radhakrishnan and Georgia Curran from The University of Sydney shared perspectives from Indigenous musicians promoting their languages and cultures through contemporary music. For example, Warlpiri songmen Jerry Jangala Patrick and Wanta Steven Jampijinpa Patrick are strengthening Warlpiri language and culture through a hip hop festival in Lajamanu called Milpirri.[14] Further north, Arian Pearson – a Yolngu music producer at Mulka Music in Yirrkala – creates music which incorporates Yolngu Matha language and songlines. He describes this process as trying "to translate our culture and our stories through mainstream music."[15] Recognising the diversity of both traditional and contemporary Indigenous languages, and innovating new ways to share them, is vital to keep them strong into the future.

13. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024, December 5). *Ear and hearing health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 2024*. https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/ear-hearing-health-indigenous-2024.
14. Examples of performances at Milpirri can be found at https://vimeo.com/321366994 and https://vimeo.com/321366955.
15. Hear more from these scholars and musicians on the Music!Dance!Culture! podcast: http://www.music-dance-culture.com/

Connections across languages

The diversity of Indigenous languages is enormous, but they also share extensive connections and relationships. Shared histories of trade, ceremony, intermarriage, migration, and care for Country are all evidenced in linguistic connections between Indigenous languages. This is true for neighbouring languages as well as languages thousands of kilometres apart.

Across the south-east of Australia, Corey Theatre – a Gunditjmara-Belgian linguist, musician, and speaker of several Indigenous languages – discovered previously hidden connections between languages. Corey combined linguistic understandings of how languages change, with an insider perspective on cultural practices of kinship and constructing canoes and coolamons from bark. From this, he identified linguistic connections between dozens of languages from Gunditjmara Country in Victoria all the way to Pitjantjatjara Country in South Australia. The related words – which might sound something like *pitji, mitji, miri, kari,* or *kali* depending on the language – have related meanings including *skin, possum skin, skin name, moiety, bark, canoe,* and *coolamon*. Corey argues that investigating related languages is useful for language revitalisation: "*When we're reviving our language, we don't just look at our language, but we start to look at other languages, and these can give us insights to our own language.*"



Figure 9: Corey Theatre presenting his research

In the Top End of the Northern Territory, connections between plant names in different languages reveal shared ecological understandings and relationships between Indigenous communities. Alexandra Marley – a non-Indigenous linguist – shared her work-in-progress database of plant names in Indigenous languages. By gathering words and ecological information for different plant species, she uncovered intriguing linguistic connections stretching across vast distances. For example, a word like *parkarl* is used by various languages for various species of plants – but the plant almost always has bright yellow flowers.

Or the word *parnar*, which is used by two different languages for two different plants – but both plants are used for washing skin. These examples suggest connections between names for plants and their appearance or usage.

Did you know?

What's in a name? The Latin names we use to classify plants represent a 'hereditary hierarchy'. That means we name plants based on their genetic connections to other plants. But there are many different ways of classifying plants, and they don't always line up across languages. For example, the sand palm (Livistona humilis) has two names in Kunwinjku: *marrabbi* if it is large, and *man-kurlurru* if it is small. The apple gum (Corymbia clavigera) has different names in Bininj Kunwok depending on which moiety the speaker belongs to: Duwa moiety call it *djarrarn*, Yirridjdja moiety call it *djanorro*. Sometimes a plant that has one Latin species name will have several names in English or an Indigenous language, or vice versa!

Among a family of languages in central Arnhem Land, a previously undescribed grammatical feature was shared by Geordie Kidd – a non-Indigenous linguist. Speakers of Ngalakgan, Rembarrnga, Dalabon, and Jawoyn will sometimes turn one verb into two words and say them in a different order – typically to emphasise the action. For example, instead of the standard Dalabon verb form *kah-lng-dowk-minj* meaning 'The boil burst open', a speaker might say *dowk kah-lng-da-nginj* meaning something like 'Bang! The boil burst open!'. By investigating connections between languages, researchers can uncover new findings which may change how we understand language.



Figure 10: Alexandra Marley presenting her research, with Auslan interpreter Rowner Fuifui

Innovation in education

Indigenous educators across Australia are developing innovative strategies for teaching their languages. Drawing on rich traditions of Indigenous educational practices, cutting-edge global research, and personal experience, these strategies are often seeing exceptional educational results.

Warlpiri language teachers at the remote Nyirrpi School in the Northern Territory have implemented a structured phonics program for children. They learn from global best practice and tailor the program to meet the needs of students learning to read in Warlpiri. Each child is given their own literacy pack – a pencil case with phonics cards, sight words, early reading books, and an assessment rubric – which is tailored specifically to them. This allows for fully differentiated teaching and feedback for every single child, which in turn leads to improved learning outcomes. Students efficiently move through the levels, from decoding sounds and words to developing fluency and reading comprehension. Michaeline Gallagher Napaljarri – a Warlpiri woman and Nyirrpi community leader – explains in Warlpiri: "*Yungulujana kurdu-kurdu-ku milki-yirrarni manu yungulu pina-jarrimi nganimpa-nyangu language-iji palka kurlu-juku Warlpiri yirdi. Yuwayi ngula-jangka karnalu-jana kurdu-kurduju milki-yirrarni wita-wita-ngurlu wiri-kirra. Yuwayi, manu karnalu pina-jarrimi nganimpa nyangu muturna-muturna manu jarlu-patu-jangka pina-jarrimi yangka pirrjirdi Warlpiri.*"[16]

Did you know?

Warlpiri educators at Nyirrpi remember a time when there wasn't even a road out to their community. Community members had to build the road by hand, without bulldozers. Then they had to protest to get a school built.

Fiona Gibson Napaljarri, Warlpiri educator and teacher, remembers: "*Ngularnalu jarti-jarrija kuurlu Nyirrpingka nganimpa karnalujana pina-mani Warlpiri-jiki, Warlpiri kamparru-wiyi yangka. Ngajurnajana tiji-manu yirnintirla kamparruju ngula-jangkaju yanurnalu kuurlu-kurra silver bullet caravan-rla-rnalujana mardarnu kurdu-kurdu panu-juku wita-wita manu wiri-wiri-rnalujana mardarnu. Teachi-manulu-rnalu Warlpiri-jiki. Ngula-jangkaju yanulpa-rnalu townu-kurralku protest-rnalu do-manu townurlaju. Yangka ngula-wardingki-patu-kurlu manu Nyirrpi-wardingki-patu-kurlu manu Yuendumu-wardingki-patu-kurlu, "Yungkalu nganpa building-waja, yungkalu nganpa yangka Warlpiri pina-maninjaku", wangkajarnalujana.*" [17] Now they self-fund the bilingual program at the school through the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust.

The full story is told in the bilingual Warlpiri and English book *Ngulajuku! Tiger's story of how Nyirripi came to be*. The book is based on an interview Fiona conducted with the late Nyirripi leader Tiger Japaljarri Morris, and was published in 2022.[18]

16. Translation: "*If kids are shown and are taught our language, we can keep our language and Warlpiri words. Then we can show kids from birth until they are grown up. Yes, we learn strong Warlpiri from our old women and men (Elders).*"
17. Translation: "*When we first started at Nyirrpi school we taught Warlpiri first. At first I taught under a Yinirnti (bean tree) and then our school was a silver bullet caravan. And we had all the kids together, the little ones and the big ones in there. We taught them all Warlpiri. And then we went to town to protest. Those people from Alice Springs, Nyirrpi and Yuendumu, we all said to the government, "Give us a building so we can teach Warlpiri." That's what we said to them.*"
18. Japaljarri Morris, T., Napaljarri Gibson, F. & Harrison, A. (2022). Ngulajuku! Tiger's story of how Nyirripi came to be. Batchelor Institute Press.

In New South Wales, a Gamilaraay language hub based at Winanga-Li Aboriginal Child & Family Centre delivers language classes to over two thousand children in over sixty different learning centres. They have found that a crafts-based pedagogy naturally connects with the "deeply sensorial nature of Indigenous ways of communicating"[19] and builds on Aboriginal identities to encourage confidence and pride. They state: "*Our exploration in the last month has confirmed that the connection to culture through arts and crafts is extremely important … Children can walk into language learning environments later in life much more confident because of what we are doing.*"

Assessment tools for language development are useful for identifying any learning difficulties children are facing, but they are inaccurate if not tailored to local contexts – as has been seen for the NAPLAN assessment.[20] A team of researchers in central Australia have developed a new tool for assessing children's language acquisition which recognises and celebrates the multilingualism that is common for children in the area. A wordlist of common words is translated into English, Eastern and Central Arrernte, Western Arrarnta, Warlpiri, Luritja, and Pitjantjatjara. Caregivers can check a child's knowledge of these words, and receive a report of their language development. It even incorporates some Central Australian sign languages![21]

Did you know?

Contact languages are languages which develop out of contact between groups of people without a shared language. For example, Kriol developed when speakers of Indigenous languages and English-speaking colonisers were learning to communicate with each other. Today, Kriol has a blend of English- and Indigenous-language words and grammar. Kriol is spoken by around 20,000 people and there is variation across different regions.[22] Yumplatok is a mix of English and Torres Strait Islander languages and is spoken by over 30,000 people.[23] There are lots of other kinds of contact languages, such as Light Warlpiri, Yarrie Lingo, or Martu Wangka. Each language has its own unique history and contemporary context.

19. Mills, K.A. & Dooley, J. (2019, p. 46). Sensory ways to indigenous multimodal literacies: Hands and feet tell the story. In J. Rennie & H. Harper (Eds.). *Literacy education and Indigenous Australians: Theory, research and practice pp. 33-50. Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-8629-9_3. Cited in Winanga-Li presentation.*
20. Wigglesworth, G., Simpson, J., & Loakes, D. (2011). Naplan language assessments for Indigenous children in remote communities: Issues and problems. Australian Review of Applied Linguistics, 34(3), 320-343. https://doi.org/10.1075/aral.34.3.04wig
21. The tool can be found at: https://little-kids-learning-languages.net/
22. Dickson, G. (2016, April 26). *Explainer: the largest language spoken exclusively in Australia – Kriol. The Conversation.* https://theconversation.com/explainer-the-largest-language-spoken-exclusively-in-australia-kriol-56286
23. Crump, D. (2020, December 14). *Language of the Week: Week Twenty-Nine - Torres Strait Creole. State Library Queensland. https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/blog/language-week-week-twenty-nine-torres-strait-creole*

Many Indigenous people – especially in Northern Australia – grow up speaking contact languages as their first language. Yet the majority of learning opportunities for these people are delivered in English, rather than their first and main language. To address this challenge, the team from Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre in Kununurra, Western Australia, has developed a learner's guide for Miriwoong which has been written in both Kriol and English. That means any Miriwoong person can learn the language, even if they don't speak much English. This is one of the first materials which teaches a traditional Indigenous language through a contemporary one. Sylvia Simon – a Miriwoong language teacher – explains that they did it this way "*because most of the people here in Kununurra speak Kriol. We pudim*[24] *Miriwoong, English and Kriol together [in the book].*" Teaching learners using Kriol – their first language – helps them learn Miriwoong – their heritage language. Sylvia continues: "*Everybody know Miriwoong-Kriol. But I'm talking about that Miriwoong language. It's so special, for us.*"[25]



Figure 11: A hand-drawn artwork by Christopher Orchard, for a choose-your-own-adventure book in Gamilaraay language. (Image supplied by Christopher Orchard)

In northern New South Wales, Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay language workers have been considering how to expand from learning words and phrases to developing fluent conversational language skills. To this end, Christopher Orchard, a Gamilaraay man, is creating a choose-your-own-adventure book called Yaama Bilaga, with hand drawn images created with inks and materials sourced entirely from Pilliga Forest. On the surface the book tells an ecological story of Pilliga Forest, while the cultural story of the forest is embedded in the imagery for those who can recognise it. The challenge of writing the story wholly in Gamilaraay sparks valuable questions about how to write complicated sentences, and the finished book will provide an opportunity for learners to extend their skills. Christopher explains: "*There's no point making a resource that people can't access. So if I'm going to build a book, it's going be free, completely in language, with speakers you can hear. Because this task needs everything.*"

These innovative and diverse educational strategies are often run on shoe-string budgets or volunteer efforts from passionate activists. More support for these programs would see them expand and flourish into the future. As Yuwaalaraay/Gamilaraay educator Odee Welsh puts it: "*There's a goal for the future to be able to have enough educators so all the students that are in these schools are able to learn our language and able to keep it going forever.*" Joanna Agius echoes these goals, and highlights that funding is needed to achieve them: "*We hope that people will see us and see the work, but we want to drive home a message that funding is vital to this work.*"

24. *Pudim* is Kriol for 'put'. The Miriwoong delegates presented using a mix of English, Kriol and Miriwoong language.
25. 'Miriwoong-Kriol' refers to the use of some Miriwoong words in predominantly Kriol speech – which is common in Kununurra – as opposed to the use of the full Miriwoong language – which is spoken by very few people.

Working together makes us stronger

Delegates at the workshop resoundingly agreed that collaboration is one of the keys to success in all aspects of language revitalisation. Language revitalisation and maintenance is a massive and complex task which requires collaboration between diverse stakeholders, researchers and experts. Productive collaboration requires deep listening, whole-hearted engagement, and adequate funding and resources.

The team from Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture centre in Kununurra highlighted the importance of building a strong team before – and while – doing language work. Miriwoong people do this by building alliances with non-Indigenous linguists, welcoming them onto Miriwoong Country and teaching them how to respect and be safe on Country. Miriwoong language teacher Darrgayi explains that *"we gotta treat them good way, make them feel that they're welcome here. So that's when I tell them, any new person, 'Come on, we go outside, sidan*[26] *get to know each other'. We gotta make sure that person feel that e*[27] *got that love, that support, and e part of us too."*

Did you know?

The Indigenous Languages and Arts (ILA) program is a government initiative which, as at 2025, funds 25 Indigenous language centres across Australia, as well as over a hundred other Indigenous language and arts projects.[28] An interactive map of these language centres can be found on the ILA website.[29] Beyond these centres, there are countless other community groups, researchers and activists working towards keeping their languages strong. You can often connect with these centres and groups through social media, to hear what's happening for the languages of the Country you live on!

In and around Sydney, a small team of Dharug teachers and linguists at Bayala Dharug run public language courses, school and university-based language classes, and on-Country camps. Since 2020, they have taught Dharug to thousands of Dharug and non-Dharug people. Dharug teacher Leanne King states: *"At the heart of Dharug language revival is our Dharug language working group. One of the biggest things about the way were doing it is that it's so collaborative."*

Tula Wynyard – a Dharug linguist working with the Ngukurr Language Centre – shared an insightful diagram of the interconnected networks of collaborators needed for impactful language strengthening projects. Elders and fluent speakers pass on linguistic and cultural knowledge in person, 'breath-to-breath'. Young people learn from and support their Elders, link spoken and written language, and share language on social media. Local coordinators and community linguists facilitate projects, connect with archival materials, and build a positive work environment. University-based linguists bring external expertise, knowledge of diverse languages, and funding for detailed linguistic research. All these stakeholders often interact through a language centre – another part of the network – which offers time, space, and resources to support language work. Many groups do not have access to a language centre that supports their languages, which makes maintaining a network more challenging.

26. *Sidan* is Kriol for 'sit down'.
27. *E* is the Kriol third-person singular pronoun, meaning 'he', 'she', or 'it'.
28. Indigenous Languages and Arts. (2024). *Indigenous Languages and Arts (ILA) Program – Fact Sheet. https://www.arts.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/indigenous-languages-and-arts-program-fact-sheet-september2024.pdf*
29. Indigenous Language Centres Map Explorer. Retrieved 3 November 2025, from https://spatial.infrastructure.gov.au/portal/apps/experiencebuilder/experience/?id=f07437a68c474fbda2e9022897419159&page=Info

A newly formed language team based at the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura Peoples Aboriginal Corporation (PKKP) in the Pilbara, Western Australia, discussed the complexities of beginning a language program from scratch. Drawing on the diverse skills and knowledges of local and national collaborators is one of the keys to success. But they also noted that sometimes all you need is just one motivated person to spark that progress. Kristy Stewart – a Pinikura woman and Community Language Officer at PKKP – explains: "*You need a lot of different people to make a language program work, but sometimes all you need is one person. You just gotta start doing things. Spend time doing, and less time thinking. Otherwise people might lose interest. So just start doing something, and learn along the way. When you find something that works, celebrate and tell everybody else about it too. We are all in it together, so let's support each other as much as we can.*"

It is also important to recognise the need for intergenerational collaboration. Language revitalisation is a long and challenging process, which needs generations of work to reach communities' goals. Miriwoong language teacher Darrgayi explains how responsibility for language is passed through generations: "*The old people had a goal. That goal was to build up the language centre, and for us to learn there. They might be all gone, but they there. In spirit and through that language, they there. Well that's our job now. We gotta keep that flame burning there.*" Miriwoong teacher Glennis Galbat-Newry explains how teaching and creating resources for the next generation ensures the sustainability of their language work: "*We make our own resources here, we prepare them in our language. Not only for us but for our kids, grandchildren. We teach our kids. So when we're not around our kids, grandchildren, great-grandchildren take over.*" And Dharug teacher Leanne King celebrates the growing successes seen in Dharug language revitalisation across generations: "*Dharug is going from strength to strength… Language revitalisation work is like the ripples… As long as we keep doing it with the right intent we will go forward.*"

Conclusion

The Australian Languages Workshop 2024 brought together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language specialists, educators, linguists and government representatives. They presented cutting-edge research and perspectives on Indigenous language projects from all across Australia. A common thread ran through all of the presentations: that we are *stronger together.*

Delegates discussed the challenges and importance of intercultural language research. Bringing together resting and living knowledges, and platforming insider perspectives, leads to stronger research.

They contemplated complex challenges facing researchers and community members trying to access language materials in archives. Institutions need to work with Indigenous custodians to establish collection and access protocols that are culturally safe and support urgent language work.

Disparities between the ways that Indigenous law/lore and Western law understand and protect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property can lead to serious negative outcomes for Indigenous communities. Wholehearted collaborations between language activists and government are working towards enshrining better protections in Australian law and policy.

Australia is home to a rich diversity of languages, from traditional spoken and sign languages, to contemporary languages like Kriol and Blak Auslan. Groups of researchers and activists representing diverse and often under-recognised language varieties are working together to advocate for better support and recognition.

Across these diverse languages, there are countless connections and relationships to be found. Investigating these connections can lead to deep and far-reaching insights about Indigenous languages, and further establish relationships between language groups.

Educators across Australia are developing innovative techniques and resources to continue intergenerational transmission for their languages. By combining globally recognised educational strategies with long-refined traditional practices, educators are greatly improving learning outcomes in their local contexts.

In all kinds of language work, delegates resoundingly agreed that collaboration is one of the major keys to success. Working as a team, and continuing that work across generations, is one of the strongest ways to keep languages and communities strong.

In interviews held throughout the workshop, delegates were asked about the importance of holding language workshops like ALW. Their reflections further cemented the themes of the workshop, that we are stronger together, and highlighted the need for more opportunities to come together, build relationships, and share language research. Their quotes below conclude this report.

> *"Yuwayi tumachi yangka nyampurla-ju pina-pina-jarrimi manu nyanyi karnalu-jana yangka ngula kalu kanyirni yangka wiyarrpa-ku karnalu-jana mari-jarrimi. Mardalu lose-u-manulu (waja-waja-manulu) language marda jungangku marda nganayi-mani kalu mardarni kalu yangka. But kanyirni kalu kujarra an nyanyi karnalu-jana wiyarrpa-wati yangka you know?"*[30] – Fiona Napaljarri Gibson, Warlpiri educator and teacher

30. Translation: *"Yes, we are learning a lot from other communities, and we see the work they are bringing to the workshop. We feel sad. Maybe they have lost their language, but they've still got it. They bring it here and we see that, you know?"*

"*It's really good, especially coming from Western Australia. It's pretty remote, kind of the other side of the country, so it's not often that we get to come over east to connect on a more national level of language work. It's good that we get to come together, meet each other, reconnect, learn from each other, and connect with people from different Countries.*" – Henry Leslie-O'Neill, non-Indigenous researcher

"*Language work can be fairly isolating… You need to be able to get exposure to other ideas, different methods, new ways of thinking and I think we all need to be able to learn from each other, as the field changes, as the concerns of the field changes, as the tools and as new data, new information comes to light. I think these kinds of workshops are critical for that really.*" – Joe Blythe, non-Indigenous researcher

"*You know, a lot of individuals are on their own journey and learning language. Just stand strong and continue to speak your language, and continue to reach out for the right services and support in your communities. And look what's out there, to come to these sort of workshops, to attend, to listen, to hear what others are doing along the line of keeping language strong and revitalising, creating the right resources, and teaching and speaking language.*" – Rowan James, KLRC Lead Field Officer, connections to many tribal groups in the Kimberley

"*We just need more and more people to come on board, from many different language speakers and different communities.*" – Vanessa Davis, Warlpiri/Arrernte researcher



Figure 12: Group photo of ALW delegates at the Cotter Dam, Ngunnawal Country.

List of presentations

An 1838 Wiradjuri text. David Nash.

Archives for analysis: facilitating archive access in revitalisation contexts. Gulwanyang Moran. Museums of History NSW.

Blak Auslan/Deadly Deaf Mob. Joanna Agius and Rodney Adams.

Bringing the RH Mathews papers back to the community. Stephen Morey and Gari Tudor-Smith.

Co-designing a Kriol learner's guide to Miriwoong. Ingrid Ningarmara, Che Kelly, Glennis Galbat-Newry, Sylvia Simon, and Henry Leslie-O'Neill. Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre.

Collect, connect and share: starting an evidence-based language program at a native title body corporate. Rosie Sitorus, Joan Ashburton, Kristy Stewart, Chanice Fleming, Denis Coutant, Breanna Kelly and Amanda Hamilton-Hollaway. Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura Peoples Aboriginal Corporation.

Connecting community and collections at the National Library of Australia. Nicki Mackay-Sim and Rebecca Bateman. National Library of Australia.

Crafts-based pedagogy in an early childhood language revival program. Renee Houldsworth, Rebecca Holland and Hilary Smith. Winanga-Li Aboriginal Child & Family Centre.

Etic and emic approaches to research on Murrinhpatha spatial language. Joe Blythe, Jeremiah Nguvidhirr Tunmuck, Raphael Wurdanmanthupirr Tunmuck and Jake Miller.

FloraLang: Building a database of Australian flora names. Alexandra Marley.

'It's out there somewhere and it's all over the place': Connecting scattered language data. Bridey Lea, Paul Williams, and Robert McLellan. Language Data Commons of Australia.

Kajili Warlpirirli pina-mani, ngula kurdu-kurdu kapi readi-mani: Structured phonics, strong Warlpiri texts and teacher training at Nyirrpi school. Emma Browne, Fiona Gibson, Verona Jurrah, Michaeline Gallagher and Courtney Lynch.

Kimberley Language Continuation Project. Rhys Collard, Rowan James and Maureen Deegan. Kimberley Language Resource Centre.

Language collections: An overview of the LDaCA collaborations. Ben Foley, Beau Williams and Otis Carmichael. Language Data Commons of Australia.

Learning and teaching Dharug: Growing the Dharug language community. Debbie Smith and Leanne King.

Legal Issues in publishing Indigenous language dictionaries. Tom Allen, Jessica Connel, and Zara Wearne. National Indigenous Australians Agency.

Little Kids Learning Languages. Carmel O'Shannessy, Vanessa Davis, Jessie Bartlett, Alice Nelson and Denise Foster.

Marŋgithirri ŋanapu mathagu: working together to keep Ritharrŋu-Wägilak strong. Rose Munur, Dawson Daniels, Charlee Horni and Tula Wynyard. Ngukurr Language Centre.

Mitji: Semantic change as influenced by localised cultural practices. Corey Theatre.

Ngarrwaa: towards Indigenous Data Sovereignty Praxis. Rosales Martinez and Gina Bundle. Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages.

Reanalysing and recategorising Central Maric languages using cultural knowledge. Gari Tudor-Smith and Thomas Watson.

Revitalising Gamilaraay-Yuwaalaraay and broader implications for Australian Indigenous languages policy and practice in comparable revival contexts. Christopher Orchard, Odee Welsh and John Giacon.

Reviving Language of Country. Talia Hart, Aunty Mary Shuttleworth and Penelope Schmidt. Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation.

Verb excorporation in Gunwinyguan languages. Geordie Kidd.

When talking about music leads to language use. Mahesh White-Radhakrishnan and Georgia Curran.

Working in partnership to develop a national language policy. Jake Budd. Office for the Arts.

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Author bios

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Henry is a Senior Research Officer at the AIATSIS Centre for Australian Languages, co-ordinating a range of language gatherings and workshops. They are also a PhD candidate at the Australian National University, collaborating with Miriwoong teachers at Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre (MDWg) to co-design language learning materials for Miriwoong. Their research focuses on how strong relationships and collaboration can lead to effective language strengthening work. Henry presented with the MDWg team at ALW in this capacity.

Kira Davey

Kira worked as a Senior Research Officer at the AIATSIS Centre for Australian Languages in 2024, during which time she coordinated ALW. Kira is also a research assistant and PhD candidate at the Australian National University where she is working on a grammar of the Yoidik (Papuan) language. Her research interests include corpus linguistics, sociolinguistics, languages of the Pacific region, complex predicates and clause chaining.

Alison L Mount

Alison is an Assistant Director at the AIATSIS Centre for Australian Languages. In 2024 she oversaw the coordination of ALW. She is passionate about community-led language revival work and elevating Indigenous voices in language policy. Most recently, she has co-authored publications on a 2022 Language Policy Symposium hosted by AIATSIS and designing a corpus for community-defined language revival outcomes.



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