Community, identity, wellbeing: the report of the Second National Indigenous Languages Survey

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Abbreviations and conventions

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
Activity Q	Language Activity Survey question
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
Attitude Q	Language Attitude Survey question
AUSTLANG	Australian Indigenous Languages Database
Australian languages	Wthin linguistics this is the standard term to refer to the Indigenous languages of Australia
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ceased functions in 2003)
ATSIS	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services (ceased functions in 2003)
BIITE	Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
CDU	Charles Darwin University, Darwin, Northern Territory
DCITA	(former) Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
ESL	English as a second language
FATSIL	Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
HORSCATSIA	House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
ILS	Indigenous Languages Support, a program of the Ministry for the Arts, Attorney-General's Department (formerly known as Office for the Arts, OFTA)
MILR	Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records program (now known as ILS)

NAATI	National Accreditation Authority for Interpreters and Translators
n.d.	'no date'—used in the bibliography to indicate the item in question has no publication date
NILS1	(the first) National Indigenous Languages Survey
NILS2	Second National Indigenous Languages Survey
NITV	National Indigenous Television http://www.nitv.org.au
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
OCHRE	Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment (NSW government program)
OZBIB	A Bibliography of Aboriginal Australia and the Torres Strait Islander languages and linguistics
PARADISEC	Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures
QLD	Queensland
RNLD	Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity
SA	South Australian
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service http://www.sbs.com.au
TAS	Tasmania
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Cultural and Scientific Organisation
VIC	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

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Executive summary

Across the world Indigenous peoples are taking action to protect, preserve and revitalise their languages. Yet every few weeks, at least one language is dying (Moseley 2012, p. 3). In 2007, *National Geographic* published a map of the top five language endangerment hotspots (Anderson and Harrison 2007) and tragically Australia is one of those five.

In order to keep Australian languages strong, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are engaging in numerous language activities, and governments are providing significant support. The first ongoing national funding for Australian languages began in 1992. This national program has now grown to approximately $10 million annually for funding language activities, particularly at the community level, to create and support projects that ensure the continuation, revival and survival of Australian languages. Nationally, there is an increase in forums for those interested in Australian languages, for example, Puliima—the biennial National Indigenous Language and Technology Forum, dedicated sessions at the Australian Linguistic Society annual conference, mailing lists, websites and other local and international forums.

In this, the report of the Second National Indigenous Languages Survey (NILS2), we offer key insights for governments and communities into the current situation of Australian languages, how they are being supported and how best to continue this support. Crucially, it complements and coincides with a renewed policy focus on supporting Australian languages, in particular *Our land our languages: language learning in Indigenous communities* (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs 2012 [HORSCATSIA]), the new National Cultural Policy *Creative Australia* (Australian Government 2012), which includes new funding to support Australian languages, the development by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) of the *Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages* within the *Australian Curriculum—Languages* (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2013a), and the development by the Australian Government of a National Framework for Indigenous Interpreting and Translating.

NILS2 follows on from the first *National Indigenous Languages Survey* (NILS1) conducted by AIATSIS in 2004–5, which had a much broader scope than the current project. The NILS1 report (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages 2005 [henceforth AIATSIS/FATSIL]) included a recommendation for a national survey of Indigenous language programs. NILS2 provides, in essence, this timely survey, together with a survey of language attitudes.

NILS2 was funded through an agreement with the Ministry for the Arts,

Attorney-General's Department, through the Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) program and undertaken by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). The agreed aims for the project were to build a better understanding of:

1. the current situation of Australian languages
2. activities supporting Australian languages
3. people's attitudes towards and aspirations for their languages, and
4. views about the most effective types of language action.

These aims are addressed in the list of 18 recommendations.

Significantly, NILS2 demonstrates that among Indigenous people across the country and of all ages, there is an overwhelming desire to strengthen traditional languages. As one survey facilitator commented, *'I was surprised that young people who don't speak language and who didn't show interest in getting involved in language programs still expressed strong feelings about the importance of their language'*. The survey data also highlighted the connection between language and identity, and between language and community. When survey participants talked about keeping language strong, they were not just talking about the number of speakers or their proficiency level. They often spoke about their desire for the language to have a stronger presence in their own and wider communities, noting that this in turn strengthens identity and connection with Country and heritage. It is not surprising that, given the strength of community support for languages and language activities, the NILS2 survey results highlight the need for more work and further funding of activities involving traditional languages.

> *I believe that if we were to revive our sleeping language, we could not only gain recognition in the Aboriginal and wider community but we could also regain our sense of identity, we could start to become a strong community and family again.*
>
> Jenna Richards
> Barngala descendant

Ultimately the intention of this report is to provide a basis for future discussions involving both governments and communities on how best to support Australian languages through building on current initiatives.

Finally, it should be noted that the focus of NILS2 was on language activities and language attitudes among organisations currently undertaking language activities. In contrast, NILS1 was focused on measuring levels of endangerment across as many languages as possible. This means that the two surveys are quite different, making comparisons difficult. Nevertheless the following section (Key Findings) presents a comparison between the broad levels of language endangerment identified in the two surveys.[1]

[1] The terms used to describe the levels of endangerment are defined in the NILS1 report, for example on pages 24 and 31.

Key Findings

The findings in NILS2 show a complicated picture with ongoing decline but also some definite signs of recovery.

The previous NILS1 survey found that of over 250 Australian Indigenous languages about 145 were still spoken, with about 110 severely or critically endangered and that about 18 languages were strong, still spoken by all age groups and being passed on to children.

Examination of the NILS2 data allows us to make the assessment that there are now only around 120 languages still spoken. Of these about 13 can be considered strong, five fewer than in NILS1. These five are now in the moderately endangered group, while some languages from that group have moved into the severely/critically endangered category. There appear to now be around 100 languages that can be described as severely or critically endangered, but at the same time a fair number of languages in this category, perhaps 30 or more, are seeing significant increases in levels of use as a result of language programs.[2]

Language situation

- Some of the traditional languages considered to be 'very strong' are showing signs of decline.
- Some traditional languages are gaining more speakers. Mostly these are languages which have not been spoken for some time but have been gradually brought back into use.
- There are traditional languages which have a substantial number of full speakers and are in a stable state of vitality.
- There is great variety in the situations of traditional languages, but regardless of their situation all traditional languages are at risk of declining.
- Recently developed Indigenous languages, such as Kriol and Yumplatok, have the largest speaker numbers, in the thousands.

Language activities and actions

- The Language Activity Survey found that language activities are not just aimed at increasing speaker numbers and revitalising or maintaining languages, they are also about helping people to connect with language and culture and improving the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

[2] These figures are estimates based on limited data so should be used with caution.

- The survey data indicates that key elements for the successful delivery of language activities are that community members are involved and committed, that there is adequate funding, and there is access to language resources.
- Many survey respondents have high ambitions for their language activities, with multiple goals, and they are carrying out these activities in a challenging environment, especially with regard to funding and skills.
- The survey data shows that there is a wide range of needs and demands in relation to traditional language, and people are delivering a wide variety of language activities throughout Australia. These include resource development, teaching, policy development, and promotion. However, more research is required to identify what language activities or language actions are most effective in what circumstances.
- Among activities surveyed there was only one instance each of master–apprentice programs and language nest programs despite the international literature indicating these are among the most effective programs. This may be changing, at least for the master–apprentice approach.[3]

Aspirations and attitudes towards Indigenous languages

- The survey data shows that traditional language is a strong part of Indigenous people's identity, and connection with language is critical for their wellbeing.
- Survey respondents were largely unanimous in their opinions about traditional languages: they want traditional languages to be strong well into the future; they want to have their language taught in school and feel that learning traditional language will help students succeed at school; they also want their languages to have better recognition within Australia. A large majority of respondents indicated that they feel it is okay for non–Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to learn traditional languages.
- The survey data indicates that active use and transmission of languages is the key to strengthening or maintaining traditional languages, while lack of opportunities prevents respondents from learning traditional languages.
- There were different opinions on recently developed Indigenous languages among survey respondents.

[3] Towards the end of the survey period a workshop took place to train people from across Australia in the master–apprentice model of language revitalisation; this has led to a number of such programs starting up in various locations.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Funding bodies should support communities that wish to implement master–apprentice and language nest programs. Community groups should be encouraged to consider these programs.

Recommendation 2

A study of the different types of language activities should be conducted, especially to examine what types of activities might be suitable for what situations. The study needs to take into consideration the different language situations as well as the community's goals.

Recommendation 3

Further research into the connection between language and wellbeing is necessary. Organisations with a special interest in Indigenous health and wellbeing should consider funding studies to examine this issue.

Recommendation 4

All Australian state and territory governments should provide dedicated ongoing funding for language work, especially targeting community-led language programs.

Recommendation 5

The Australian Government should include allocation of funding to language activities as part of health and justice programs.

Recommendation 6

The Australian Government, and state and territory governments should allocate funding for the development and delivery of programs to train language workers, interpreters and language teachers.

Recommendation 7

Language centres and universities should cooperate to identify opportunities for students of linguistics to gain experience in working with community-led language programs. We particularly support the provision of scholarships for Indigenous students of linguistics.

Recommendation 8

All levels of government should allocate funding to collecting institutions which hold material on traditional languages for digitisation, preservation and access.

Recommendation 9

All levels of government should support projects to collate information about language material, particularly that held in small, local and private collections which may not be listed in public collection catalogues, and make the information available online. Ideally this would be done on a national level as a single project.

Recommendation 10

The Australian Government, and state and territory governments should allocate funding to the recording of languages which are poorly documented.

Recommendation 11

Funding bodies for language activities should make it a condition of funding that a copy of any materials produced with their funding will be archived at AIATSIS. The importance of archiving materials should be promoted more generally to those who are running language programs.

Recommendation 12

The Australian Government and language advocacy groups should widely promote the importance of using traditional languages at home, and especially with children.

Recommendation 13

All levels of government should consult local communities to identify and implement appropriate measures that increase the use of traditional languages in local areas; for example, in dual place naming.

Recommendation 14

All levels of government should engage translators and interpreters of traditional languages for communication between governments and community people whose first language is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language, as well as in legal, health and other situations where effective communication is paramount.

Recommendation 15

Traditional languages should be recognised in the Australian Constitution as the first languages of Australia. All levels of government should promote Australian languages as a fundamental part of the unique heritage of Australia.

Recommendation 16

All education systems should work together with Indigenous communities to implement traditional language classes in schools, and schools should work with

local Indigenous groups and communities to develop appropriate ways to give recognition to the languages of their region.

Recommendation 17

Speakers of recently developed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages such as Kriol, Yumplatok and Aboriginal English should be given appropriate support, including interpreter/translator services and first-language education (bilingual education).

Recommendation 18

The Australian Government should commission a project to develop a model for a coordinated approach to language work and a funding mechanism that supports this model.

1 Introduction

This is the report of the second National Indigenous Languages Survey (NILS2) project. It presents the results of a survey of work being done throughout Australia on Australian languages, and reports on the attitudes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards their languages and their aspirations for them.

NILS2 follows on from the first National Indigenous Languages Survey (NILS1), conducted in 2004. The NILS1 report (AIATSIS/FATSIL 2005) helped to lay the groundwork for the Australian Government's development of the first National Indigenous Languages Policy (Garrett and Macklin 2009), released in 2009. The NILS1 survey asked a wide range of questions about language situations, resources and programs. As well as updating some of the information collected under NILS1, NILS2 collected additional types of information, in particular details about language activities and people's views about languages and language activities. NILS2 was undertaken by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) under a funding agreement with the Ministry for the Arts, Attorney-General's Department, which administers the Indigenous Languages Support program (ILS), formerly known as Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records or MILR.[4]

NILS2 employed a very different methodology and survey instrument from NILS1 (the NILS2 and NILS1 survey methodology and instruments are described in Appendix 1 and Appendix 4 respectively), which was developed through discussions between AIATSIS and the Ministry for the Arts in addition to wide-ranging community consultation. These discussions and consultations strongly indicated that it would be most beneficial and valuable to both the government and those involved in language work for NILS2 to focus on collecting information about languages and language activities, and on people's views about languages and language activities.

The NILS2 report comes at a time when Australia's Indigenous languages are being discussed more widely than ever before. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia are speaking out about the need to protect, preserve and strengthen their languages. Indeed there is a wave of activity across Australia, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in many places actively working to learn more about their languages, to use and strengthen them, and to ensure they are passed on to the next generation. This activity encompasses individuals collecting materials and educating themselves about their own heritage language, Indigenous groups and organisations setting up a great variety of projects to access and make use of existing (often archived) materials, language classes for children

[4] For the purposes of this report, the two terms 'ILS' and 'MILR' are interchangeable, but the term appropriate to the point in time will be used in each instance.

and adults, and formal and informal networks to make language knowledge more widely available.[5]

At the same time, Australian languages are receiving unprecedented public attention. For example:

- the release of *Our land our languages* (HORSCATSIA 2012), the report of the inquiry by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs into language learning in Indigenous communities
- the Australian Government's new national cultural policy, *Creative Australia* (Australian Government 2012), which incorporates action on Australian languages, including new funding
- the development of the *Draft Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages*, part of the Australian Curriculum—Languages (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2013a)
- the discussion of Australian languages in work such as FaHCSIA's *Footprints in time: the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children* (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2013b)
- *Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report* 2013 (Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2013a)
- the National Framework for Indigenous Interpreting and Translating, currently under development by FaHCSIA
- the long-running debate about bilingual education in the Northern Territory
- the NSW Government's Indigenous languages strategy (New South Wales Government n.d.)
- increased media attention on ABC, SBS, NITV, as well as on commercial media networks
- dual-naming policies being adopted by state governments

These examples demonstrate that the value of Australian Indigenous languages is becoming more widely understood among governments, policy makers, academics and activists, as well as the wider public. This NILS2 report assembles valuable information about Australian languages that can be used for policy development by governments and those planning language projects across the spectrum of community and government organisations.

1.1 Aims of the project

The aims of the NILS2 project are to build a better understanding of:

- the current situation of Australian languages
- activities supporting Australian languages
- people's attitudes towards and aspirations for their languages, and

[5] See the *Our Languages* website (Our Languages 2011) for different types of language programs delivered, and also the website of the Ministry for the Arts (Office for the Arts 2013a) for case studies and short clips of examples of language programs from the ABC.

- views about the most effective types of language action.

These terms of reference are the result of discussions between AIATSIS and the Ministry for the Arts. They are also informed by community consultations conducted by AIATSIS, with the hope that the information collected will help communities and governments to make future plans that support Australian Indigenous languages. The results coming out of the project provide information that will help communities and governments to strengthen traditional languages.

1.2 Language Activity Survey and Language Attitude Survey

The purposes of the project fell into two broad categories: to establish the nature of language activities, and to canvass people's opinions on Australian languages and effective language programs. This approach required two methodologies, therefore NILS2 employed two surveys: a Language Activity Survey and a Language Attitude Survey.

The Language Activity Survey asked *organisations* about the sorts of community-based Australian language activities that they have run or are running. Survey questions addressed:

- type of language activity
- output of language activity
- goal of language activity
- resources required for language activity, and
- state of the language.

Seventy-five organisations participated in the Language Activity Survey, yielding information for 86 language activities. These organisations were primarily Indigenous organisations but also included universities and other non-Indigenous bodies.

The Language Attitude Survey asked Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander *individuals* for their thoughts about their languages. The questionnaire asked:

- how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel about traditional languages—languages that arose in Australia before 1788
- how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel about recently developed Indigenous languages—contact languages, such as Kriol, Yumplatok and varieties of English that have arisen since 1788, and
- the language background of the person.

A total of 288 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participated in the Language Attitude Survey. Questionnaires for each of these surveys can be found in Appendix 2, while a description of the survey methodology and intended reach is in Appendix 1.

1.3 Structure of the NILS2 Report and supporting documents

The documents resulting from NILS2 consists of three parts: the NILS2 Report, the NILS2 Survey Results, and the Appendices.

Chapters 2–5 of the NILS2 Report present the key findings which arose from the analysis of survey data, while Chapter 6 sets out a discussion of these findings and recommendations. The NILS2 Report consists of:

Chapter 2 'Current language situation' This chapter presents key findings that address the project aim 'To build a better understanding of the current situation of Australian languages'.

Chapter 3 'Activities supporting languages' This chapter presents key findings addressing the project aim 'To build a better understanding of the activities supporting the languages'.

Chapter 4 'Views about the most effective types of language action' This chapter presents key findings addressing the project aim 'To build a better understanding of views about the most effective types of language action'.

Chapter 'People's attitudes and aspirations' This chapter presents key findings that address the project aim 'To build a better understanding of people's attitudes towards and aspirations for their languages'.

Chapter 6 'Key findings, discussion and recommendations' This final chapter presents a discussion of key findings and the recommendations that emerge.

The NILS2 Survey Results document presents the detailed results for each question asked in each of the Language Activity Survey and the Language Attitude Survey. This document lays out the data that underpins the findings presented in the NILS2 Report.

The Appendices consist of the following sections:

Appendix 1 NILS2 project An overview of the NILS2 project.

Appendix 2 Survey questionnaires A copy of the survey questionnaires.

Appendix 3 Language surveys A list and review of language surveys conducted around the world.

Appendix 4 NILS1 project An overview of the NILS1 project and an update on the status of the recommendations listed in the NILS1 report.

2 Current language situation

Key findings

- Some of the traditional languages considered to be 'very strong' are showing signs of decline.
- Some traditional languages are gaining more speakers. Mostly these are languages which have not been spoken for some time but have been gradually brought back into use.
- There are traditional languages which have a substantial number of full speakers and are in a stable state of vitality.
- There is great variety in the situations of traditional languages, but regardless of their situation all traditional languages are at risk of declining.
- Recently developed Indigenous languages, such as Kriol and Yumplatok, have the largest speaker numbers, in the thousands.

2.1 Overview

A key aim of the project was to develop 'a better understanding of the current situation of Australian languages', with a focus on language use and proficiency against speaker numbers. The reach of the Language Activity Survey was restricted to those organisations currently undertaking language activities, so it does not examine all languages and language situations.

To address this aim the NILS2 Language Activity Survey asked respondents to provide information on speaker numbers, proficiency, frequency of language use, and intergenerational language transmission. Despite its restricted reach the survey does give revealing information about the current situation of Australian languages. All of these—not just speaker numbers, but also levels of language knowledge and use—are important indicators of the language situation. In addition, the Language Activity Survey sought the number of people who identify with each language.

Four age groups were used to measure the language situation in the survey questionnaire:

- 01–19 years
- 20–39 years
- 40–59 years
- 60+ years.

Three proficiency levels were used in the questionnaire:

- can only say some words and simple sentences
- can have a conversation in limited situations—not able to express everything in the language (part-speakers)

- can have a conversation in all situations—able to express almost everything in the language (full speakers).

Frequency of language use was divided into five categories:

- always
- often
- sometimes
- rarely
- never

Language transmission categories used in the survey questionnaire were:

- The language has not been used as an everyday language for some time, but some people are now learning the language.
- The language is known to very few speakers, mostly of the great-grandparental generation. Only people in this generation are fluent in the language.
- The language is used mostly by the grandparental generation and older. Only people in the grandparental generation and older are fluent in the language.
- The language is used mostly by the parental generation and older. Only people in the parental generation and older are fluent in the language.
- The language is used by most children in limited situations, but some children can use it in all situations. Some children and older people are fluent in the language but some children are not fluent.
- The language is used by all age groups, including children. People in all age groups are fluent in the language.
- There are no speakers left.

The Language Activity Survey received 102 responses, covering about 79 individual languages (some languages appeared more than once). It should be noted that not every respondent answered every question. The analysis of responses shows that:

- Of the 54 languages for which responses were received to this question, 32 were said to have full speakers in at least one of the age groups. The number of full speakers varied from one full speaker to a few thousand. Other languages had part-speakers and/or people who can only say some words and simple sentences.
- The survey data shows a wide cross-generational decline in usage; for example, one language has 'always' for the 60+ age group, declining through each generation to 'rarely' for the 0–19 age group. However, there are also languages where some younger age groups are said to have a higher usage than the older groups.
- Of 102 responses received, 15 respondents answered that people in all age groups are fluent in the language, while six respondents answered that there are no speakers left. Twenty-six responses indicated that these languages have not been used as an everyday language but some people are now learning the language. Others are spoken by some generations but not all.

Responses given in the NILS2 surveys were analysed and compared to NILS1 data and census data, where possible, with regard to numbers of speakers, speaker proficiency levels and frequency of language use. The NILS2 Language Activity Survey used slightly different categories from NILS1 for frequency of language use, but for the purpose of analysis the following equivalences can be assumed.

Table 2.1: Frequency of language use categories, NILS1–NILS2 equivalences

NILS1	NILS2
All day, most days	Always
Often	Often
Some words a day	Sometimes
Few times a week	
On special occasions	Rarely
Not at all	Never

The proficiency categories used were also different between NILS1 and NILS2. NILS1 used the following categories:

- don't speak or understand
- understand some and speak some
- understand well and speak some
- understand well and speak fluently
- N/A.

Moreover, NILS1 simply asked for the total number of speakers, and it was often not clear whether a response included the number of full speakers only or all proficiency levels. To resolve this issue, NILS2 asked for the number of speakers of different proficiency levels and across each age group.

Thus the NILS1 and NILS2 data sets are not completely comparable. The census data is also not comparable to NILS1 or NILS2 data as it is based on the total number of individuals who use the language at home and does not contain questions about proficiency or frequency of use.[6] The data collected for both NILS1 and NILS2 only represents individual understandings of the language situation. In only a few cases were there multiple respondents for the one language. Furthermore, NILS2 respondents were unlikely to be the same as for NILS1.

Comparisons between NILS1, NILS2 and the census data present methodological problems. Nevertheless we applied comparisons as this is the only data of its

[6] The exact question used in the census is, 'Does the person speak a language other than English at home?

- Mark one box only
- If more than one language other than English, write the one that is spoken most often.'

kind available. Our view is that the comparison still provides valuable insights into the situations of the languages surveyed and the changes they have undergone.

The analysis of NILS1, NILS2 and census data indicates that some languages are showing signs of decline, some have been stable and some have gained speakers. We also found that among the traditional languages surveyed there is great variety in how each language situation has changed since NILS1, including in terms of: number of speakers, levels of proficiency, frequency of use, and language transmission. This variety indicates that while categories such as 'languages under revitalisation' or 'languages in the maintenance situation' can be useful in broad discussions, work to strengthen a language requires a detailed understanding of that language on its own terms, its history, its status, the attitude of the community, etc. It is not sufficient to simply assign a language to an endangerment category and use that as the basis for action.

It should be mentioned here that all of the languages surveyed have associated language activities and these activities may have contributed to the current situation of each of these languages. For example, the language of the Adelaide Plains, Kaurna, had not been spoken on a daily basis since the 19th century, and had no full or even part-speakers throughout most of the 20th century. But over the last three decades there has been much intensive and dedicated work on reviving Kaurna (Amery 2010), resulting in a small number of people who can say some words and sentences.

In the following sections of this chapter we present evidence found in the survey data against each of the key findings above, with specific examples to illustrate the findings.[7]

2.2 Declining traditional languages

A language may be said to have declined or be declining when it is spoken by more limited age groups, less frequently by certain age groups, by fewer speakers, or a combination of these. A language may also be said to be declining if speakers' proficiency levels have declined.

The survey data shows that even some of the traditional languages considered to be strong—they have a relatively large number of full speakers in all age groups—are declining. The data also indicates that some traditional languages are at risk of losing full speakers completely.

The following examples present detailed information on several languages which currently have full speakers but are showing signs of decline. The languages were selected to illustrate the variety of situations.

2.2.1 Anmatyerre

Anmatyerre is a language from central Australia that is reported to have comparatively large numbers of full speakers in all age groups. It can therefore be considered

[7] In cases where NILS1 does not have information on frequency of language use, there is no comparison table.

to be a 'strong' language but it is showing signs of decline. The NILS2 survey data shows that there are more speakers of Anmatyerre in the younger age groups—322 full speakers in each of the 0–19 and 20–39 age groups, with 230 full speakers in the 40–59 age group and only 46 in the 60+ age group. This could be a reflection of how the population is distributed across age groups. According to the census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012) the 0–24 age group has the highest population among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, so if, as seems likely, all Anmatyerre persons speak the language, we would expect more speakers among the younger generations.

Table 2.2: Number of speakers by proficiency level and age group—Anmatyerre

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
Full speakers	322	322	230	46
Part-speakers	Unsure	Unsure	Unsure	Unsure
Words and sentences	No answer	No answer	No answer	No answer

The total number of full speakers is 920. The respondent reported that there are between 501 and 1000 people who identify with Anmatyerre. If these 920 full speakers all identify with Anmatyerre, it means that most of the 1000 people who identify with Anmatyerre are full speakers. In the NILS1 report the number of speakers in 2005 was estimated at 900, so there is little change.

When only the number of speakers is considered, Anmatyerre appears to be strong and healthy, but when the frequency of language use by different age groups is taken into account, the language shows signs of decline. The NILS2 survey data shows that only the oldest age group, 60+ years, speak the language 'always', while the other age groups speak the language 'often'. This appears to be due to the dominance both of English and another traditional language, Warlpiri. The respondent who provided the information for Anmatyerre commented that a lot of speakers are multilingual and switch between Anmatyerre, Warlpiri and English, with Warlpiri being the primary language.

Comparison with the NILS1 data also indicates that people are speaking the language less often compared to the situation in 2004.

Table 2.3: Frequency of language use, NILS1–NILS2 comparison—Anmatyerre

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
NILS1	Often	Often	All day, most days	All day, most days
NILS2	Often	Often	Often	Always

This age distribution suggests that for languages like Anmatyerre to remain 'strong', younger generations need to speak the language more often. It is also essential for these languages to be properly documented while full speakers are around so that their knowledge can be kept and passed on to future generations.

2.2.2 Wik Mungkan

Wik Mungkan is a language from regional Queensland. NILS 2 data shows that it has full speakers in all generations, but comparison with NILS1 data on the number of full speakers and part-speakers in each age group, and also the frequency of use in different age groups, reveals signs of decline. One NILS2 respondent reported that in the youngest group (0–19 years) there are more part-speakers (200 speakers) than full speakers (50 speakers).

Table 2.4: Number of speakers by proficiency level and age group—Wik Mungkan

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
Full speakers	50	300	200	80
Part-speakers	200	150	50	No answer
Words and sentences	No answer	No answer	No answer	No answer

The response shown in Table 2.4 gives a total of 1030 speakers while the sole respondent for this language reported that more than 1000 people identify with the language, making it difficult to know what proportion of the total are speakers. The NILS1 report gave the number of speakers in 2004 as 1500 while the 2011 census reports that 1355 people indicated that they use this language at home. Although it is problematic to compare these numbers they suggest that the number of speakers may be declining.

The level of language use also appears to be declining between generations with NILS2 data demonstrating that only the oldest group (60+ years) 'always' speak the language while other age groups speak the language 'often'. Again, comparison to the NILS1 data indicates that speakers are using the language less often.

Table 2.5: Frequency of language use, NILS1–NILS2 comparison—Wik Mungkan

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
NILS1	All day, most days	All day, most days	All day, most days	All day, most days
NILS2	Often	Often	Often	Always

We suggest that to address the declining use of languages like Wik Mungkan by younger generations it is important to support community activities which encourage the use of the language in a wide range of domains. Young people are more likely to want to maintain the use of their language if it is relevant to the activities in which they are particularly engaged, such as multimedia devices, school, music and sport. Again, it is essential for these languages to be properly documented while there are still full speakers to ensure the knowledge is preserved and passed on to future generations.

2.2.3 Badimaya

Badimaya is a language from Western Australia. According to the NILS2 respondent, this language has declined to the point that there is only one full speaker left and it is at risk of losing full speakers completely. The one remaining full speaker is over 60 years of age. There are some other speakers in older age groups (40–59 and 60+ years) who can have a conversation in limited situations. The response also suggests that there could be people who can say several words and simple sentences—the respondent wrote 'unsure' instead of '0'.

Table 2.6: Number of speakers by proficiency level and age group—Badimaya

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
Full speakers	0	0	0	1
Part-speakers	0	0	~5	~5
Words and sentences	Unsure	Unsure	Unsure	Unsure

The respondent reported that the number of people who identify with this language is in the range 51–250, which means that only a small percentage of these people speak the language. The NILS1 report gives an estimate of three speakers in 2005 but it is not clear whether this number includes part-speakers. Regardless, unless full knowledge of the language is passed on to the younger generation by this one remaining speaker, this language will soon have no full speakers. This appears to be almost inevitable, as the language is little used. The one remaining full speaker, as well as part-speakers in the 60+ age group, use the language 'rarely' and other age groups do not use the language at all. This is less frequent than before—the NILS1 data indicates that people used to use the language more often.

Table 2.7: Frequency of language use, NILS1–NILS2 comparison—Badimaya

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
NILS1	On special occasions	Few times a week	Few times a week	Some words a day
NILS2	Never	Never	Never	Rarely

Clearly, Badimaya is critically at risk of losing all full speakers, if not all speakers, with the total number of full and part-speakers being so small. We note that efforts have been made to record languages like Badimaya, develop language resources and run teaching and transmission activities but further effort is required to ensure that the language knowledge is recorded and can be passed on to future generations.

2.3 Traditional languages which have gained speakers

Among the survey data there is evidence of some traditional languages having gained speakers. These languages include those which have not been spoken for

some time but have been brought back into use by community people. *This does not necessarily mean that they are becoming stronger*, as the number of speakers is only one indication of language health—other indicators might reveal signs of decline. It may be that the increase in the number of speakers is the result of language activities, an outcome that should be celebrated.

2.3.1 Dharawal

Dharawal is a language from coastal New South Wales. This language has gained speakers in the youngest age group, 0–19 years.

The NILS1 report estimated the number of speakers of Dharawal in 2005 to be four. No number was reported in either the 2001 or the 2006 census, but in the 2011 census 16 people indicated that they use this language at home. A NILS2 respondent reported many more speakers (50 in total, all in the youngest group) using the language 'often', though their proficiency level is low, able to say only some words and simple sentences.

Table 2.8: Number of speakers by proficiency level and age group—Dharawal

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
Full speakers	No answer	No answer	No answer	No answer
Part-speakers	No answer	No answer	No answer	No answer
Words and sentences	50	No answer	No answer	No answer

This is still a very small percentage of the people who identify with Dharawal; the respondent reported that over 1000 people identify with this language.

Although the respondent gave no number for other age groups (20–39 years, 40–59 years and 60+ years), these age groups were reported to use the language 'rarely'. This suggests that there are speakers in these age groups as well.

Comparison to NILS1 data also indicates that the younger age groups (0–19 years, 20–39 years and 40–59 years) are using the language more frequently. In fact, the NILS1 data indicates that these age groups did not use the language at all previously.

Table 2.9: Frequency of language use, NILS1–NILS2 comparison—Dharawal

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
NILS1	Not at all	Not at all	Not at all	On special occasions
NILS2	Often	Rarely	Rarely	Rarely

Dharawal was reported not to have been used as an everyday language for some time. There are other languages which belong to this category but have gained speakers, although they may have very limited proficiency. We ascribe this achievement to community people's efforts to bring the languages back to life.

However, these languages could easily lose speakers and quickly decline if efforts to strengthen the languages are not maintained.

2.3.2 Wajarri

Wajarri is a language from the Murchison region of Western Australia. The respondent for Wajarri reported that the language is mostly used by grandparental and older generations, and the most fluent speakers belong to the oldest age group (60+ years), up to 15 speakers. There are several other full speakers: around two speakers in the 20–39 age group and around five speakers in the 40–59 age group. There are also around 20 part-speakers in each of the 40–59 and 60+ age groups, as well as people in all age groups who can say several words and simple sentences.

Table 2.10: Number of speakers by proficiency level and age group—Wajarri

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
Full speakers	0	~2	~5	~15
Part-speakers	Unsure	Unsure	~20	~20
Words and sentences	50(?)	50(?)	30(?)	20(?)

The respondent reported that the number of people who identify with Wajarri was in the range 51–250, which means that more than half of these people have some language knowledge (based on the assumption that all who speak Wajarri identify as Wajarri).

The NILS1 report estimated the number of Wajarri speakers in 2005 to be 20, but with no full speakers in the 20–39 and 40–59 age groups. By contrast, the NILS2 data indicates a total of up to 22 full speakers, some from within these two age groups, and a total of 40 part-speakers. Thus, comparison of data between the two surveys indicates an increase in the number of speakers and of proficiency level (note, however, both the NILS1 data and the NILS2 data were dependent on the respondents' opinion and perception, and the proficiency categories used in the two surveys were not the same). The census shows a slight increase from 86 in 2006 to 88 in 2011.

This does not mean that the language is not at risk of decline. The language has only a small number of full speakers, spread disproportionately across the older age groups. The younger the age group, the fewer full speakers there are, with none at all in the 0–19 age group. In fact, when the frequency of language use is compared between NILS1 and NILS2, decline is evident for all ages. The youngest age group (0–19 years) is reported to have changed from speaking the language 'on special occasions' to 'never', although we note that this is in conflict with the '50(?)' in this age group who have some knowledge.

Languages like Wajarri can rapidly decline without a more concentrated effort to transfer the full knowledge of the language to younger generations and to get younger people using the language.

Table 2.11: Frequency of language use, NILS1–NILS2 comparison—Wajarri

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
NILS1	On special occasions	On special occasions	Some words a day	Often
NILS2	Never	Rarely	Rarely	Sometimes

2.3.3 Murrinh-Patha

Murrinh-Patha is a language from Wadeye (Port Keats) in the Northern Territory. Murrinh-Patha is the common language of the region and is gaining speakers. Several respondents to the Language Attitude Survey listed Murrinh-Patha as one of the traditional languages with which they identify. One respondent mentioned that they do not speak their parents' languages, but rather Murrinh-Patha because it is the language of the place in which they grew up; that is, Port Keats/Wadeye.

This language is spoken by all generations, with a substantial number of full speakers in each age group. More speakers (1500) are found in the youngest group (0–19 years) than in the older age groups, again reflecting population distribution across age groups. There is also a substantial number of speakers across all age groups who can only say some words and simple sentences, and a small number of part-speakers who can have a conversation in limited situations.

Table 2.12: Number of speakers by proficiency level and age group—Murrinh-Patha

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
Full speakers	>1500	>1000	>500	>100
Part-speakers	15	5	30	5
Words and sentences	>1000	>1000	>1000	>1000

The respondent reported that the number of people who identify with Murrinh-Patha is over 1000; it is likely that all of these people have some language knowledge, many as full speakers.

> *Murrinh-patha is the lingua franca of the community so it is a strong language. Getting kids on country is very important as much of the knowledge of dreaming and spiritual associations with place is being lost due to lack of access to country. Ethnobiological knowledge is also being lost as children spend almost all of their time in the community.*
>
> Maree Klesch
> Batchelor Institute

The numbers reported by the NILS2 respondent are much higher than those in the 2011 census, which reports Murrinh-Patha as being spoken at home by 2410 people, compared to 1832 in the 2006 census and 1157 in the 2001 census. The NILS1 report gives an estimate of 1150 speakers in 2005. Murrinh-Patha has thus been steadily

gaining speakers and will likely continue to do so. This does not mean that all aspects of language knowledge are passed down to younger generations. Younger generations are not learning certain knowledge, such as Dreaming stories and ethnobiological knowledge, due to the lack of opportunities to visit Country.

2.4 Traditional languages which have been stable

Languages which are stable are those showing little change over the last several years in the number of speakers, frequency of use or proficiency levels.

2.4.1 Warlpiri

Warlpiri is a language from central Australia. The respondent who provided information on Warlpiri did not give actual numbers of speakers but rather indicated that in each age group 'all' speak the language. This presumably means everyone who identifies with the language, which the respondent gives as over 1000. Speakers of all age groups are reported to use the language 'always'.

Table 2.13: Number of speakers by proficiency level and age group—Warlpiri

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
Full speakers	All	All	All	All
Part-speakers	0	0	0	0
Words and sentences	0	0	0	0

It should be noted that there were three respondents who provided information about Warlpiri. The answers shown here were from one of the respondents. Two other respondents wrote 'unsure' for all age categories and proficiency levels.

It is thus not clear how many speakers there are for this language, but according to the 2006 and 2011 census data the number of people who use this language at home has not changed significantly. The censuses report 2507 speakers in 2006 and 2509 in 2011, suggesting that this language is stable, showing signs of neither decline nor growth.

Table 2.14: Frequency of language use, NILS1–NILS2 comparison—Warlpiri

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
NILS1	All day, most days	All day, most days	All day, most days	All day, most days
NILS2	Always	Always	Always	Always

2.4.2 Anindilyakwa

Anindilyakwa is a language from Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island, in the Top End of the Northern Territory. A NILS2 respondent reported that Anindilyakwa is used by all age groups, with full speakers in all age groups using the language

'always'. The number of speakers tapers off in the older age groups. The 0–19 age group has 800 speakers while the next generation up, 20–39 years, has only 500 speakers. This number is more than halved in the 40–59 age group (200 speakers), and in the 60+ age group it is halved again (100 speakers).

Table 2.15: Number of speakers by proficiency level and age group—Anindilyakwa

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
Full speakers	800	500	200	100
Part-speakers	No answer	No answer	No answer	No answer
Words and sentences	No answer	No answer	No answer	No answer

There were two respondents who provided information about Anindilyakwa. The above answers were from one of the respondents; the other did not answer this question.

The total of the speakers from the data presented above is 1600, so it is likely that everyone who identifies with this language is a speaker. This number is a little higher than the 2011 census figure of 1480 people using Aninydilyakwa at home. The NILS1 report also estimates the number of speakers in 2005 as 1500. So again, this language appears to be neither declining nor gaining speakers.

Warlpiri and Aninydilyakwa have both been reported to be targets for language activities. We believe it is likely that these activities have contributed to keeping them strong, and that any interruption to the continuity of these activities could undermine the stability of their target languages.

2.5 Every traditional language is at risk

As illustrated in the sections above, there is great variety in the situations of traditional languages in Australia; some are declining, some are gaining speakers and others are remaining stable. But regardless of their situation, all traditional languages are at risk of decline and loss. Some languages considered to be strong are already showing signs of declining vitality. This tendency can be extrapolated to other 'strong' languages not included in the survey. It is likely that the previously mentioned language activities, combined with other factors, have contributed to the continued strength of Warlpiri and Anindilyakwa, and that without continued effort their vitality is not assured. Even languages which are gaining speakers are at risk: neither Dharawal's increase in speaker numbers and language use nor Wajarri's increase in speaker numbers are guaranteed to continue without ongoing efforts. Murrinh-Patha is currently gaining speakers due to the centralisation of people in Port Keats/Wadeye from the surrounding areas, as well as its status as a common language for the region; however, language knowledge is still diminishing due to the lack of opportunities to visit Country. Clearly, all traditional languages surveyed, if not all traditional languages in Australia, are at risk of declining, and appropriate actions need to be taken for each language to safeguard its vitality.

There is also a question of what is now spoken. A traditional language used today could be very different from the traditional language as it was spoken before 1788. For example, a NILS2 respondent reported that Tiwi has up to 35 speakers, none of whom are full speakers. There are five part-speakers in the oldest age group (60+ years) and some people who can say several words and simple sentences among people over 20 years and possibly in the 0–19 age group.

Table 2.16: Number of speakers by proficiency level and age group—Tiwi

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
Full speakers	0	0	0	0
Part-speakers	0	0	0	<5
Words and sentences	Unsure	<10	10	10

The numbers given in Table 2.16 are significantly lower than those reported in the past. The 2006 census reports 1716 people who speak Tiwi at home, and in the 2011 census the figure increased to 2102, but this increase is at odds with the NILS2 figures above. In fact, the NILS2 respondent (to the Language Activity Survey) specified that they were reporting the number of speakers of 'Old Tiwi'. There were four Tiwi respondents who participated in the Language Attitude Survey, and three of them specifically indicated that they speak Modern/New Tiwi, which is very different from Old Tiwi—the language which used to be spoken—because of the influence of English; it has undergone rapid change since colonisation. Warlpiri too is undergoing change with many younger people now speaking 'Light' Warlpiri (O'Shannessy 2005), while research on young men's Murrinh-Patha indicates that young people speak differently to the extent that older people may sometimes struggle to understand what they are saying (John Mansfield, personal communication).

2.6 Recently developed Indigenous languages

The category 'recently developed Indigenous languages' includes Aboriginal Englishes and creoles such as Kriol, spoken across the region from the Kimberley to Katherine NT, and Yumplatok, spoken in the Torres Strait Islands. A pidgin is a language that develops from contact between languages and is not the first language of anyone, whereas a creole is an expanded pidgin with communities of speakers at all age levels. These recently developed Indigenous languages are now used widely among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in certain parts of Australia. 'Australian Aboriginal English' refers to the distinctive varieties of English used by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and which display influences from traditional languages.

A NILS2 respondent for Yumplatok reported that it is used by all age groups and has thousands of full speakers in each age group. It also has part-speakers and people who are able to say several words and simple sentences.

Table 2.17: Number of speakers by proficiency level and age group—Yumplatok

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
Full speakers	5000	7000	4000	3000
Part-speakers	Unsure	Unsure	Unsure	Unsure
Words and sentences	Few	Few	Few	Few

There is no data on the number of Yumplatok speakers from NILS1. The census data shows an increase followed by a decline: 1240 in the 2001 census, 6042 in the 2006 census and 5369 in the 2011 census, but this could be an undercount. Many Torres Strait Islander people are multilingual—the data from the Language Attitude Survey shows that many if not all speak Yumplatok in addition to local traditional languages, such as Kalaw Kawaw Ya (and its close relatives) and/or Meriam Mir. However, the census only allows for one language name, and in the most recent census respondents might have written the name of traditional languages rather than Yumplatok. Nonetheless, Yumplatok is spoken by a large number of people and the reality is more likely to be in line with the increase between 2001 and 2006.

Yumplatok speakers in all age groups use the language 'often'. As mentioned above, many Torres Strait Islander people are multilingual and the reported frequency of use, 'often' rather than 'always', suggests speakers switch between Yumplatok and other languages.

Table 2.18: Frequency of language use, NILS1–NILS2 comparison—Yumplatok

	0–19 years	20–39 years	40–59 years	60+ years
NILS2	Often	Often	Often	Often

Yumplatok was the only recently developed Indigenous language reported in the NILS2 Language Activity Survey, but information from other sources such as the census indicates that Kriol is rapidly gaining speakers. The 2001, 2006 and 2011 census data sets give the number of people who speak Kriol at home as 2990, 4213 and 6781 respectively. These numbers again seem to be undercounts as, according to Year Book Australia, 2009–2010 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010), linguists estimate as many as 20,000 to 30,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people speak Kriol as their first language.

Clearly, recently developed Indigenous languages have more speakers than traditional languages. The value of these languages needs to be recognised, in particular by governments, education bodies and the wider public, and they should be given ongoing support. This support could include interpreter/translator services and recognition and use (where appropriate) within schools (possibly in first-language/bilingual education) and any agencies where effective communication is necessary.

3 Activities supporting languages

Key findings

- The Language Activity Survey found that language activities are not just aimed at increasing speaker numbers and revitalising or maintaining languages, they are also about helping people to connect with language and culture and improving the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- The survey data indicates that key elements for the successful delivery of language activities are that community members are involved and committed, that there is adequate funding, and there is access to language resources.
- Many survey respondents have high ambitions for their language activities, with multiple goals, and they are carrying out these activities in a challenging environment, especially with regard to funding and skills.

The Language Activity Survey collected information about 86 language activities. The potential range of activities being surveyed was diverse, and questions were organised within five broad categories as set out below.

1. language teaching and transmission (e.g. language nests, language classes)
2. development of language resources (e.g. dictionary, story book, computer program)
3. collecting, recording and archiving language information
4. promotion of language (e.g. performance, radio program)
5. language planning and policy (e.g. advocacy, establishment of a language centre).

There was diversity even within these categories, and no two activities were the same. Yet the analysis of data revealed some commonalities between activities.

3.1 Goals of language activity

Although there may be a perception that language activities are primarily aimed at increasing proficiency levels and speaker numbers, the Language Activity Survey data does not support this assumption. Rather, the survey found that respondents most commonly conduct language activities in order to strengthen people's connection with their language and culture, to build a sense of identity and wellbeing, and to increase language awareness.

The Language Activity Survey asked respondents to select the goals of their language activities from a list of 14 goals (see Figure 3.1). The most frequently selected goal was 'To help people to connect with their language and culture' (91 per

cent), followed by 'To increase awareness of the language among the community' (81 per cent) and 'To improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people' (79 per cent). The fourth most frequently mentioned goal was 'To promote the language to the general public', mentioned by 74 per cent of respondents. None of these are primarily about increasing the number of speakers or making language stronger.

In order to meet these goals, respondents have been delivering programs such as language camps and teaching on Country, which tie together language and cultural activities, as well as promotional activities using different media, performance and song. Respondents for 89 per cent of activities agreed with the statement that their activities will improve the wellbeing of participants.

On the other hand, fewer language activities had goals related to language use: 70 per cent of activities had a goal 'To increase the use of the language in the target group', 65 per cent had a goal 'To increase language use within a particular setting' and 50 per cent had a goal 'To increase the number of language speakers'. These results indicate that not all language activities are about increasing the number of speaker or language use.

3.2 Key elements for language activities

The analysis of survey responses indicates there are three key elements for the success of community-led language activities:

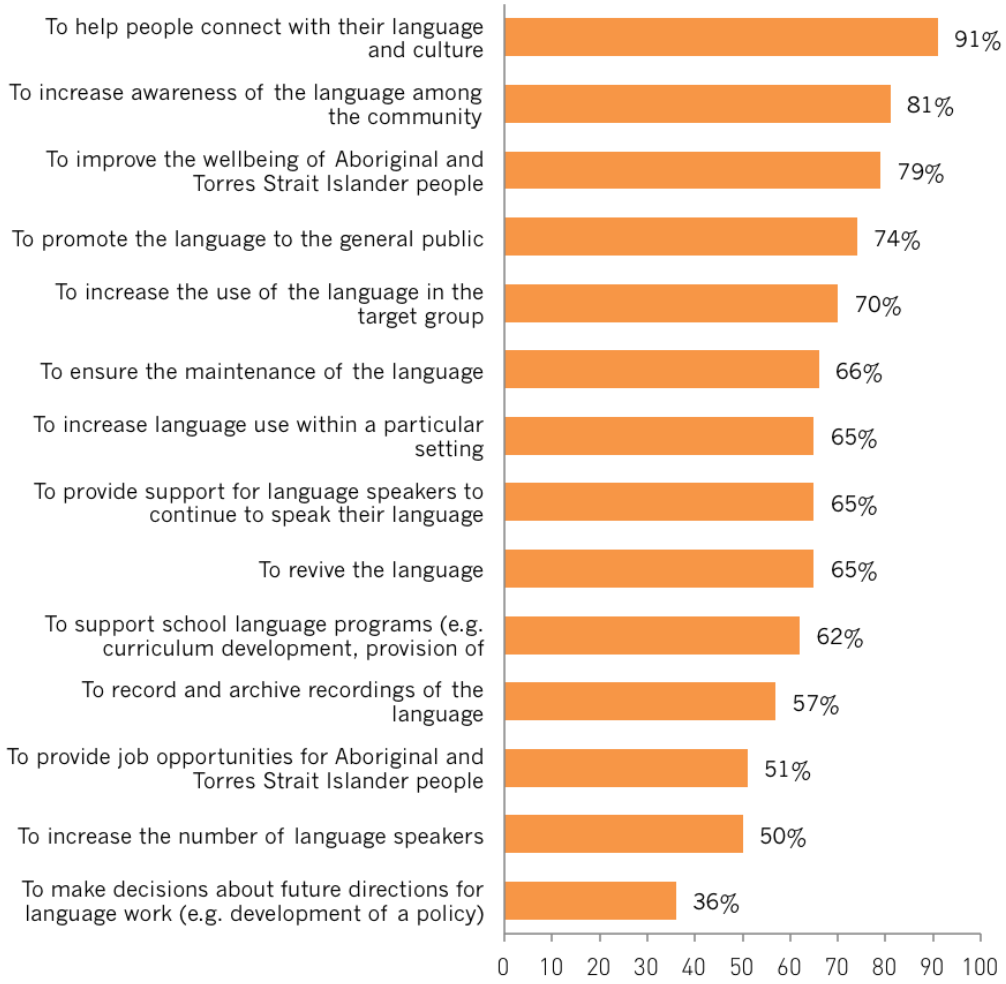
1. having community members involved and committed, in particular people with appropriate skills and language knowledge
2. funding
3. access to language resources.

These concur with some of the characteristics of successful language activities identified by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (HORSCATSIA 2012, p. 199).

The Language Activity Survey asked respondents to describe success factors for language activities. It also asked what factors could prevent or limit success in their language activities. Several themes came out of the responses, with community involvement the most frequently mentioned (63 per cent). The importance of community involvement underscores the fact that language cannot exist without a community and vice versa. Language activities cannot take place without people's involvement (thus 'commitment among participants' is the fourth factor). The emphasis on community reflects the need for ownership of language activities—for a language activity to be successful, the language community has to endorse it and have a sense of owning it.

> *Firstly ongoing funding, Secondly community support, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations, i.e. Local Council, DECD, and community members. [Also] the knowledge and expertise of Linguists.*
>
> Emma Hay
> Burrandies Aboriginal Corporation

Figure 3.1: Goals of language activities



The six most frequently mentioned categories were the following (also see Figure 3.2):

- **Community involvement.** Involving local community members in language activity planning, administration and facilitation helps language activities to succeed. These members can be Elders, particularly language speakers, or anyone in the community. (63 per cent of activities)
- **Funding.** The availability or otherwise of funding has great impact (38 per cent)
- **Access to resources.** Availability of and access to language resources for teaching and learning helps language activities to succeed. These materials include dictionaries, recordings, and textbooks. This category also includes easy access to materials, especially in remote areas. (35 per cent)

- **Involvement of professionals.** Involving experienced linguists, researchers, or teachers, as well as training for such professionals (29 per cent)
- **Commitment among participants.** Participants' interest, commitment, and dedication to language programs (24 per cent)
- **Collaboration.** Collaborating with or receiving support from other organisations. This category also includes in-kind contributions from other organisations, such as schools. (20 per cent)

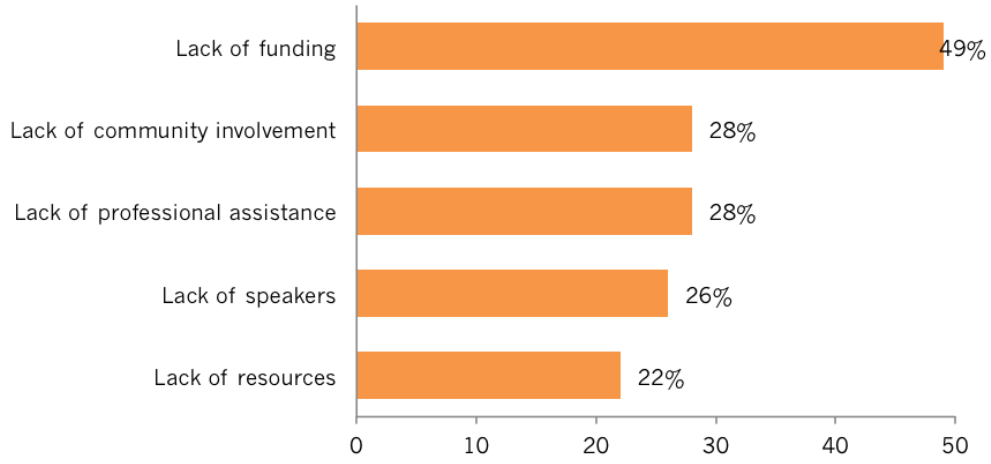
Figure 3.2: Six most frequently mentioned factors for successful language activities (percentage out of 86 activities)

Unsurprisingly, most of the factors reported to prevent language activities from succeeding are the opposite of those that aid their success (see Figure 3.3). 'Lack of funding' stood out, cited for 49 per cent of activities, followed by three other factors that were nearly equal: 'lack of community involvement' (28 per cent), 'lack of professional assistance' (28 per cent) as well as lack of traditional language speakers/aging speakers (26 per cent). 'Lack of resources' was also frequently mentioned (22 per cent).

> *For our program to be successful, financial and professional support to provide training to community members so they can deliver language classes with the appropriate developed resources for all ages.*
>
> Michael Ingrey
> Dharawal Language Program

In summary, the factors for successful language activities and the factors that prevent success are practically the same. Involvement of community and people is the key element of community-led language activities. A language activity cannot

Figure 3.3: Five most frequently mentioned factors that prevent language activities from succeeding (Percentage out of 86 activities)



take place without adequate involvement from community members, people with the appropriate skills to lead the activity, and committed participants. Further, support and collaboration from outside the community could also aid language activities.

Two other key elements are funding and access to language resources, but these are not readily available, as discussed below.

3.3 Challenging environment

The survey data shows that many language activities have multiple goals, suggesting that respondents have many aspirations for their language activities, despite the fact that they are carried out within a challenging environment. These ambitious activities are often carried out despite a lack of sufficient funding and human resources to carry them out properly.

Among the 86 activities surveyed, 52 per cent were reported to be well supported financially. This percentage appears to be high, but the result should be interpreted with caution; it may be the case that organisations with sufficient funding were more willing to participate in the Language Activity Survey. In fact, some of the organisations approached about participating in this survey declined to participate because their application for ILS funding had been unsuccessful.

The majority of activities surveyed were dependent on external funding—only seven per cent of activities were fully self-funded. The Australian Government is the main funding source for the activities surveyed; 65 per cent of activities received funding from the Australian Government, of which 26 per cent are solely funded by this source. These figures could have been inflated slightly due to the accessibility of information about current and recent grantees on the ILS website—these organisations were all approached about the survey. There is no register of

language programs, so information about language activities which are funded by other sources cannot be easily found. At the same time, there is a very small number of funding sources for language activities. It may truly be the case that most language activities in Australia are funded by the Australian Government and the fact that many of the activities surveyed are funded by ILS could be a reflection of this situation. AIATSIS has suspended its grant program due to lack of funding.[8] However, the program was never large and only a small proportion was available for language activities. Another source is the Australian Research Council but it only funds activities with an academic research component.

In any case, competition for Australian Government funding is tight. For the 2012–13 financial year the ILS program administered by the Ministry for the Arts received 108 applications seeking over $16 million against a budgeted $9.9 million (Office for the Arts 2012b). The government recently announced an increase in ILS funding of just under $14 million over four years (Australian Government 2012), but this still does not meet demand. Also, this funding is directed to only certain types of activities, namely digital and multimedia activities (Office for the Arts 2013b). Further, as more new applicants apply for funding, which is likely to happen, the competition could become tighter.[9] State funding is very limited with only New South Wales having a funding program. Other states do not have dedicated programs although funding may be offered under different kinds of programs or departments such as the Northern Territory Jobs program, the Western Australia Department of Justice, and so on.

Securing ongoing funding is almost impossible. Funding usually runs from one to, at most, three years, and community organisations are burdened with having to continually apply for funding. One year may give them just enough time to get things going, when the reality is that language activities can often take many years to complete or have no pre-determined end point. A large proportion of language activities surveyed, 34 per cent, are reported to be ongoing with no planned end point. Some respondents commented that they are doing whatever they can with limited funding, and if funding stops their activity stalls until funding becomes available again. As mentioned above, lack of funding was the most frequently mentioned factor that limits or prevents the success of language activities.

Another issue is human resources. By nature, a language activity most often requires people who have had training in language work or with a linguistics background, or teachers who can deliver language classes. Many of the activities surveyed had such people involved (but not necessarily full-time, some as little as

[8] *Our land, our languages* (HORSCATSIA 2012, Recommendation 29) recommends the Australian Government consult with AIATSIS to determine an appropriate and sustainable funding model in order for it to recommence its research grants program in the 2013–14 budget.

[9] Many grantees apply for further funding and thus the total of number of applicants is likely to increase (note that the introduction of three-year funding means that some recipients may only apply for funding every few years), but this in turn means that some of the available money in coming years is already allocated to these organisations and the remaining funding available to new applicants will be less.

a half-day per week); 57 per cent had linguists, 23 per cent had language workers with a formal qualification (certificate or diploma), and 34 per cent had teachers involved.[10] However, 26 per cent of activities surveyed were carried out without any of these professionals even when the activities appear to require their skills, such as making a dictionary, teaching language through adult or child language classes, and making resources for teaching. Moreover, 38 per cent of activities had language workers without a formal qualification involved. It is notable that respondents for 66 per cent of activities agreed that their activities would have benefited from additional staff training.

A lack of training, or of trained people, is not the only human resources issue; employment is another. Many of the activities surveyed had unpaid staff; 49 per cent of activities involved unpaid Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people while 30 per cent of activities had unpaid non–Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This high proportion of unpaid staff may be due to the lack of funding, another argument for more funding. It is risky for an activity to depend on the good will and availability of unpaid people, as their level of involvement may not be guaranteed.

Indigenous remote communities have to do their best with the people and resources available and these are not always the most qualified. Accommodation constraints, living conditions and funding limitations also mean that the work which needs to be ongoing over many years, if not having an unlimited time scale, does not work to the optimum level. Also, because government policies change, the support changes also so it may be a case of one step forward and two steps back. For instance when the government decided to stop the bilingual program in the school it was believed by the people in the community that one of the Principals burnt a lot of the resources that were held in the school and that had been made by the local people.

Jane Karyuka
Aurukun Shire Council

Another key element identified above is limited access to language resources. Unsurprisingly, there is a lack of language resources that can be used in language activities since, for many languages, activities have only recently begun and resources have not had time to develop. Thus, half of all activities surveyed (53 per cent) had a component for developing language resources in order to meet this shortfall.

[10] The survey did not ask whether teachers had a teaching qualification.

4 Views about the most effective types of language action

Key findings

- The survey data shows that there is a wide range of needs and demands in relation to traditional language and people are delivering a wide variety of language activities throughout Australia. These include resource development, teaching, policy development and promotion. However, more research is required to identify what language activities or language actions are most effective in what circumstances.
- Among activities surveyed there was only one instance each of master–apprentice programs and language nest programs, despite the international literature indicating these are among the most effective programs. This may be changing, at least for the master–apprentice approach.

In addressing the question about the most effective types of language action, the survey sought responses in two main areas: (1) what people want to see happening and what they are trying to achieve, and (2) what types of action could support people's needs and aspirations.

It is clear from the Language Attitude Survey data that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people want traditional languages to be strong, and respondents indicated that for this to happen languages have to be *used* and *transmitted* from one generation to another (see the discussion in Chapter 5 on people's attitudes towards traditional languages).

Languages can be used in a variety of domains and services; indeed, respondents expressed their interest in using traditional languages in a variety of situations: school classes, care services for both Elders and children, interpreting/translating, community newspapers, TV or radio programs, music and song writing programs, etc. There is an array of language activities that has the potential to increase language use.

Among the activities surveyed, the most frequently cited transmission activity was 'school programs'—14 per cent of activities included this component. This is despite the fact that schools were not target participants for the survey.[11] Another frequently mentioned transmission activity was 'community language class or workshop for children' (seven per cent), while there was only one 'community language class or workshop for adults' in the survey data. There were other kinds of

[11] See Appendix 1 for the target participants of the survey. Purdie et al. 2008 presents a study of Indigenous language programs in schools.

activities that involved language use and transmission: language camp; teaching language through song; language content for a radio program, TV program or a local paper in traditional language; and so on.

However, there was only one instance each of a master–apprentice program and a language nest program in the survey data. These programs create opportunities for intergenerational transmission of languages between speakers and adults, and between speakers and pre-school children respectively, and these programs have been adopted by many language groups overseas.

The Language Activity Survey asked respondents to identify the goals of their language activities. As discussed in Chapter 3, the majority of language activities reported in the survey had multiple goals. The top three were 'To help people connect with their language and culture', 'To increase awareness of the language among the community' and 'To improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people'. In working towards these goals, respondents are delivering a variety of language activities, but the survey data does not shed any light on which types of activities are most effective for meeting each of these goals.

Many of the language activities surveyed were not yet completed; among 86 activities surveyed, only 15 activities had been finished. Respondents for 60 per cent (nine activities) of these completed activities answered that their activities had met the intended goals. On the other hand, 64 activities were still in progress at the time of the survey. Respondents for 70 per cent (45 activities) of these in-progress activities answered that their activities would meet the intended goals. A slightly higher percentage of respondents from in-progress activities felt that their activities would meet their goals compared to respondents from completed activities. It may be that this difference reflects respondents' optimism while they are in the midst of delivering activities.

It should be noted that these results are based on self-reported information so it is difficult to say whether the responses are a true reflection of actual outcomes. Some respondents might have had reservations about saying their activity did not succeed or that it might not achieve its goals, so this result has to be considered carefully. Without an external assessment of language activities it is difficult to determine which activities were successful, to what extent, and in what sense.

Even among the 15 completed activities that were reported to have met their goals, when the categories of the activity, a description of the activity, output of the activity and goals of the activity are compared it is often difficult to see how they relate to each other. This is not to say that efforts made by community people to strengthen or keep language strong have not been fruitful. As discussed in Chapter 2, some languages are getting stronger and gaining more speakers due to community efforts.

The NILS2 project provides valuable insights into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's aspirations for their languages, and the types of activities that are being undertaken. However, the survey data does not provide strong evidence as to which types of language action are the most effective in which situations, largely because of the variety and complexity of the situations.

5 People's attitudes and aspirations

Key findings

- The survey data shows that traditional language is a strong part of Indigenous people's identity and that connection with language is critical for their wellbeing.
- Survey respondents were largely unanimous in their opinions about traditional languages: they want traditional languages to be strong well into the future; they want to have their language taught in school and feel that learning traditional language will help students succeed at school; they also want their languages to have better recognition within Australia. A large majority of respondents indicated that they feel it is okay for non–Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to learn traditional languages.
- The survey data indicates that active use and transmission of languages is the key to strengthening or keeping traditional language strong, while lack of opportunities prevents respondents from learning traditional languages.
- There were different opinions on recently developed languages among survey respondents.

The 288 respondents who participated in the Language Attitude Survey were from diverse backgrounds. They came from different parts of Australia—urban, regional and remote—from different age groups and from both genders. There were those who speak traditional language and those who do not. Some had participated in language activities and some had not. Despite the diversity, they were of one voice in numerous parts of the survey.

5.1 Language, identity and self-esteem

Throughout the survey it was clear that a large majority of respondents felt that their traditional language is a very important part of their identity. As shown in Figure 5.1, the majority of respondents (91 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed that the *use* of traditional language is a strong part of their identity as an Abori-

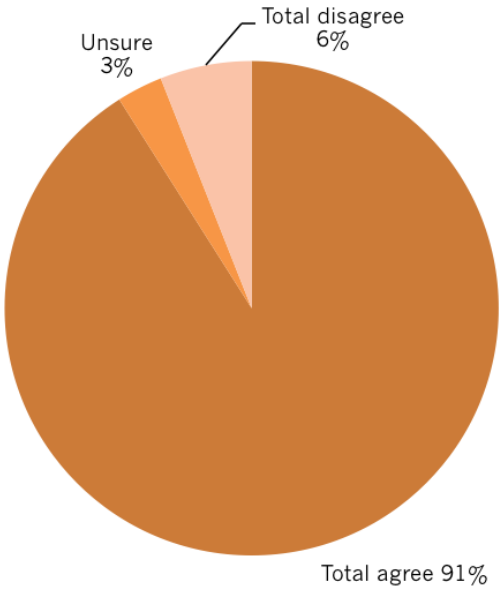
Strong cultural identity enables one to feel proud of themselves, and speaking and maintaining ones language raises self esteem and enables one to feel good about themselves. Traditional language is important for maintaining strong cultural connections. Where traditional languages have been taken away from communities, a sense of loss, grief and inadequacy develops. To keep communities and generations strong, traditional language being passed from one generation to another is vital.

Brooke Joy
Boandik descendant

ginal/Torres Strait Islander person. More precisely, 75 per cent of respondents strongly agreed, illustrating that traditional language plays an important role in respondents' sense of identity. Only six per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Most respondents (98 per cent) agreed that the use of traditional languages improves the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (see Figure 5.2). The fact that 76 per cent of this majority 'agreed strongly' gives further weight to this response. Only one respondent (0.3 per cent) disagreed with this statement.

Figure 5.1: Responses to the statement, 'The use of traditional language is a strong part of my identity as an Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander person' (percentage out of 288 respondents)



Respondents were then asked to write why they feel the use of traditional languages improves the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The following three themes emerged from the responses (see Figure 5.3).

- **Belonging.** The use of traditional languages improves the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by strengthening their sense of identity and sense of belonging to their tradition, culture, ancestor, spirit, family, community, land, and/or country. (57 per cent)
- **Empowerment.** The use of traditional languages empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by strengthening their self-esteem, pride, and positive feelings in general. (38 per cent)

Figure 5.2: Responses to the statement, 'The use of traditional languages improves the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people' (percentage out of 288 respondents)

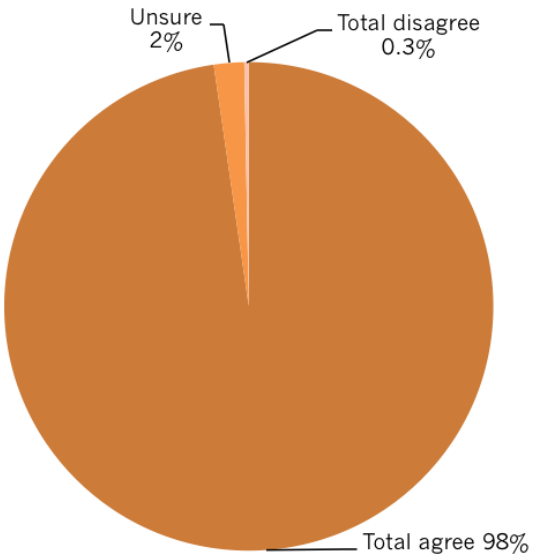
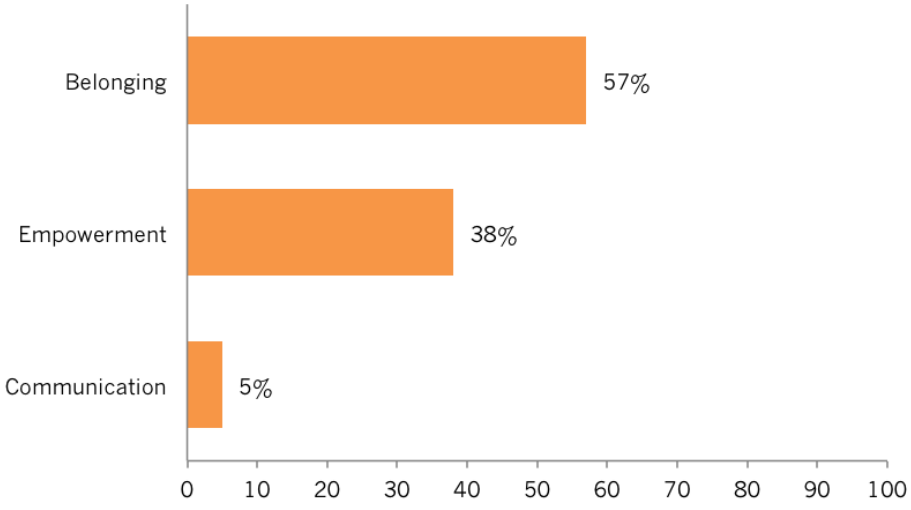


Figure 5.3: Reasons why use of traditional languages improves wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (percentage out of 281 respondents)



- **Communication.** The use of traditional languages improves the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by allowing them to communicate with each other. (5 per cent)

The first two categories are clearly closely related; knowledge of one's traditional language was seen to be very closely connected to positive feelings about a sense of identity and self-esteem.

The more functional value of language, as a medium of communication, is considered by only five per cent of respondents to play a role in wellbeing.

5.2 Keep traditional language strong through use and transmission

The survey data indicates that the majority of respondents felt traditional languages should be kept strong well into the future. Indeed, the response was almost unanimous, with 97 per cent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that keeping traditional languages strong is important to them.

Also representing this view are responses given to the question asking what people would like to see 20 years from now in regard to the use of traditional languages. Seventy-four per cent of respondents expressed a desire for traditional languages to be strong, widely spoken, used or known in communities and passed on to younger generations. Twenty-nine per cent of respondents indicated that they want opportunities to learn traditional languages through language programs delivered in schools, in language centres and/or communities, and employment opportunities around these programs.

> *That properly resourced language programs are available in schools throughout Australia. That students who have gained competency in languages are able to gain employment which uses those language skills. That all Australians have an understanding of the wealth of the languages and share pride in promoting them to the rest of the world.*
>
> Faith Baisden
> Yugambeh community

Respondents were also virtually unanimous about the importance of using traditional language. Ninety-eight per cent agreed that it is important to know and use traditional language. The majority (95 per cent) also agreed that it is important for their children to learn and use traditional language. When asked why they feel that way, 46 per cent explained that traditional languages should be passed down to the next generation. Many respondents (41 per cent) also attributed their response to the fact that traditional language is their identity, who they are: it is part of their heritage and it allows them to connect with their culture and their people. This concurs with the finding discussed in the last section.

These responses on the importance of the use of traditional language agree with the opinions expressed about what keeps traditional language in use by people within a community. The survey data indicates that most respondents felt the key to keeping their traditional languages strong is ensuring their use and transmission.

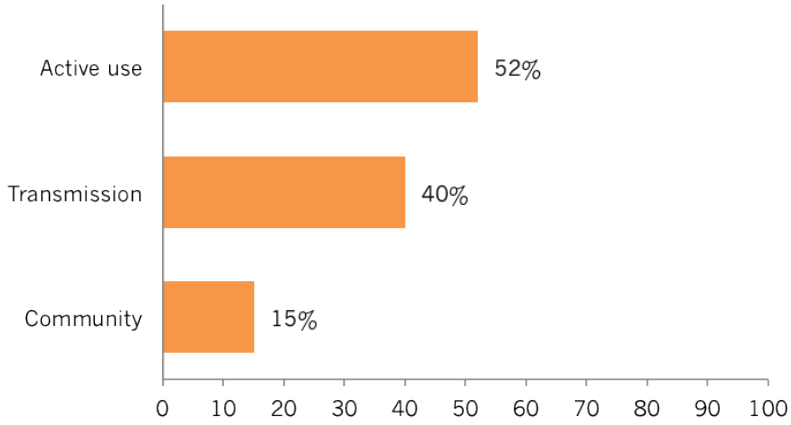
The survey asked respondents what helps to keep traditional languages in use by people within a community (see Figure 5.4). The most frequent response (52 per cent) was 'active use'; using traditional languages as much as possible and engaging in activities that require them. While this response appears to be a repetition of the question, this was how many respondents answered and the most likely interpretation is that people were referring to the need for greater 'opportunity' to use the language.

The second most frequently mentioned aid was 'transmission': transmission of traditional languages from the older to younger generations, from speakers to non-speakers (40 per cent). This may take place at school, in a community or a family setting, or on Country. This is closely related to the first factor, 'active use'—language cannot be transmitted without being used. Another category of response, less frequent than the previous two, focused on 'community'; being part of communities or families that facilitate and support the use and learning of language, or being in the bush, on Country, et cetera. This was mentioned by 15 per cent of respondents.

Because I want my kids to be able to learn what I couldn't at a young age, so that they can learn culture and language to help find their identities. I want my children to know who they are & be proud of themselves no matter what obstacles or negatives get thrown their way. Life has always been hard for me growing up as an Indigenous man & to this day I still feel like I'm fighting, fighting to get an education as well as still finding out who I am & about my culture. I do not want that kind of struggle for my children, I want them to get the best education possible & to know that we are all equal, even in our own country & to be able to learn more about their identities.

Ray Burns
Butchulla descendant

Figure 5.4: Top three factors that keep traditional languages in use by people within a community (percentage out of 288 respondents)



The converse was also true: many responses indicated that a major handicap to learning language is the lack of use by speakers and the lack of speakers. Sixty-seven per cent of respondents mentioned that external factors limit opportunities for using traditional languages. This could be because there are few speakers around them with whom to use the language, or due to the dominance of English or another traditional language which is not their own. Some respondents also pointed to social problems in Indigenous communities, such as drugs, alcohol and violence. Twenty per cent of respondents mentioned emotional factors. People feel they are disconnected from community or culture and this feeling prevents them from using traditional language. Or some are unwilling to use or learn traditional language because they are ashamed or shy, or they lack the confidence.

When asked what obstacles prevent them from participating in a language activity, the two most commonly selected reasons from a list of 12 possibilities were about opportunities—33 per cent of respondents selected 'scheduled at wrong time' and 35 per cent selected 'not available in area'. Both of these refer to a lack of opportunities.

While the majority of respondents (97 per cent) were certain that keeping traditional languages strong is important for themselves, many people were not certain about how others feel. When asked whether they feel most people in their community are *not* interested in keeping the language strong, 50 per cent of respondents disagreed, 17 per cent were unsure while 33 per cent agreed or strongly agreed. This latter result, with one-third agreeing, showed no correlation with respondents' age, gender, language proficiency level, or their experience with language activities. While it is difficult to know why such a large proportion feel this way, it may point to a need for more discussion within communities of language and language activities so that a shared view on these issues can be developed.

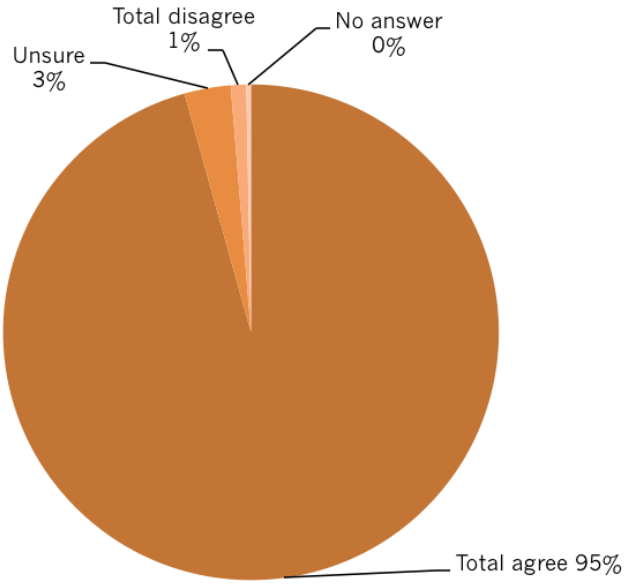
> *Continual use of the language within the community and teaching it to children from as early in life as you start communicating with them, so from birth. Immersing Aboriginal community members in our traditional languages across all age groups.*
>
> Shannon Williams
> Dharawal, Dhungutti, Dhurga descendant

5.3 Traditional language at school

Survey respondents were almost unanimous in the view that traditional language should be taught at school (see Figure 5.5). This view was held by 95 per cent of respondents, with 76 per cent indicating they 'strongly agreed'. Only three respondents (one per cent) disagreed.

Respondents were also asked whether the use of traditional languages helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people succeed at school, with 80 per cent of respondents agreeing (see Figure 5.6). Only three per cent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed about the effect of traditional language use on school performance, and 15 per cent were unsure.

Figure 5.5: Responses to the statement, 'Traditional languages should be taught in school' (percentage out of 288 respondents)



5.4 Traditional language in the wider community

Survey respondents wanted traditional language recognised in the wider Australian community. When asked what place traditional languages should have within Australia as a whole, respondents most frequently mentioned recognition of traditional languages from outside of Indigenous communities—indicated by 41 per cent of respondents.

A large proportion of respondents (76 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed that it was okay for non–Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to learn traditional languages, while 16 per cent were unsure. Seven per cent disagreed (see Figure 5.7).

> *I think that Aboriginal languages should be taught in schools to be offered to the whole community to let people know that we are a people with different language and culture. Australians and the rest of the world need to know that Aboriginal Languages are still here and need to be encouraged and preserved to keep our people strong. We have a voice that make us uniquely Australian. We have a language that goes on for thousands of years, and some are still as fluent as it was all those years ago. I think it's important and should be brought forward for all Australians to see and hear and respect.*
>
> Gillian Bovoro
> Adnyamathanha person

Figure 5.6: Responses to the statement, 'The use of traditional languages helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people succeed at school' (percentage out of 288 respondents)

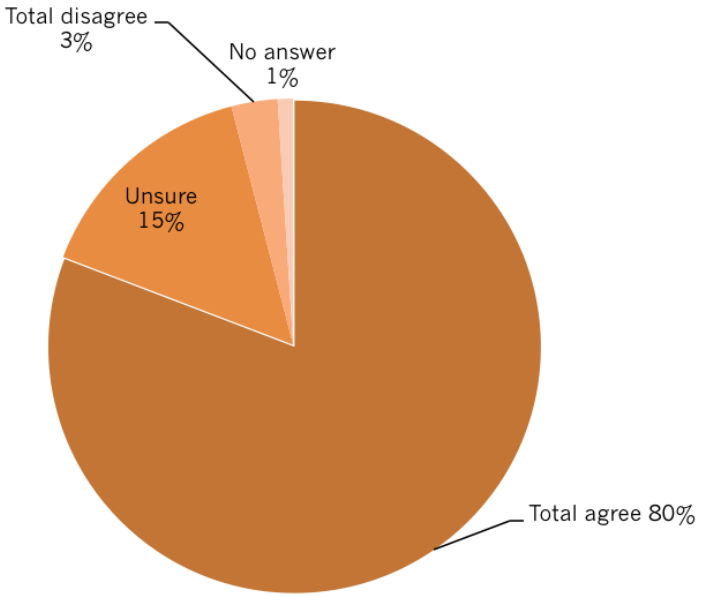
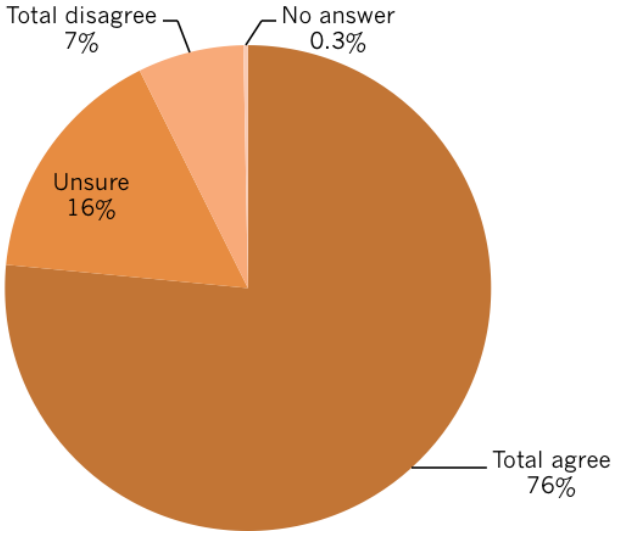


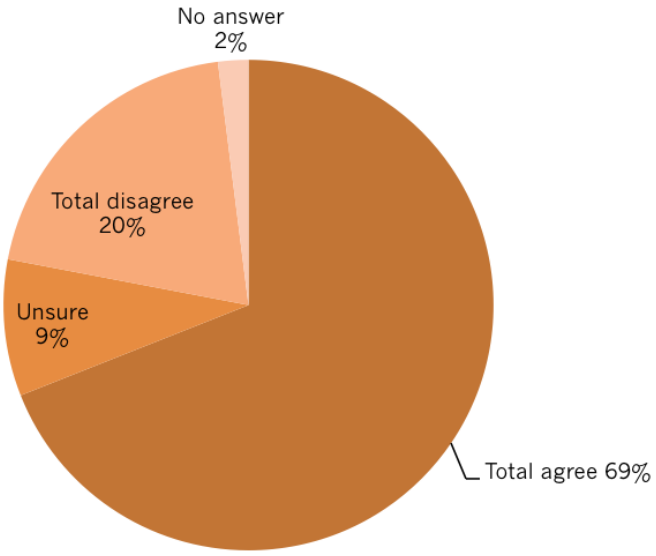
Figure 5.7: Responses to the statement, 'It is okay for non–Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to learn traditional languages' (percentage out of 288 respondents)



This openness to non–Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is echoed in responses to the question about target audience in the Language Activity Survey: 71 per cent of the 86 activities surveyed have non–Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as one of the target audiences.

However, some indicated that this is only acceptable so long as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have opportunities to learn their language. Further, many respondents (70 per cent) felt that only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should teach traditional languages (see Figure 5.8). Only 20 per cent of respondents disagreed with this restriction, and nine per cent were unsure how they felt about it. These results indicate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel a strong sense of ownership of their traditional languages, and that many wish to have some control over the learning and teaching of their traditional languages.

Figure 5.8: Responses to the statement, 'Only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should teach traditional languages' (percentage out of 288 respondents)



5.5 Recently developed Indigenous languages

The survey data suggests that there is a wide range of opinions as to the role and importance of recently developed Indigenous languages.

The category 'recently developed Indigenous languages' includes Aboriginal English and creoles, such as Kriol spoken in northern Australia from the Kimberley through to the Katherine region, and Yumplatok spoken in the Torres Strait Islands. The Language Attitude Survey asked respondents, 'What place do recently

developed Indigenous languages have within Australia as a whole?'; their responses fell into six categories (see Figure 5.9). Each of the first three categories were mentioned by roughly the same percentage of respondents, approximately 20 per cent. They are:

- **Unsure.** Respondents specifically reported that they are not sure what place recently developed Indigenous languages have. (23 per cent)
- **Recognition.** Like traditional languages, recently developed Indigenous languages should be recognised within Australia, officially, legally, constitutionally, and within the education system. They should be available for interpreting and translating, and other government services, and the general public should be aware of and respect these languages. (22 per cent)
- **Important.** Recently developed Indigenous languages are important for many reasons, including communication, spiritual/physical wellbeing, preservation of knowledge of Country, and a sense of Aboriginality. (22 per cent)

'Recognition' was mentioned more frequently by those who identify with recently developed Indigenous languages—out of 41 respondents who identify with such languages, 49 per cent mentioned 'recognition', whereas only 18 per cent of the 244 respondents who do not identify with these languages mentioned 'recognition'. The 'important' category was more equally distributed, selected by 27 per cent of those who identify with recently developed Indigenous languages, and by 21 per cent of those who do not.

> *These languages are still important. They're part of the new world. Languages are going to change; they're going to be mixed with English now for the new generation. These new languages are still less important than traditional languages, though.*
>
> Dennis Thomas
> Nyangumarta language speaker

There were also some negative feelings about recently developed Indigenous languages. These feelings are represented in the following two categories.

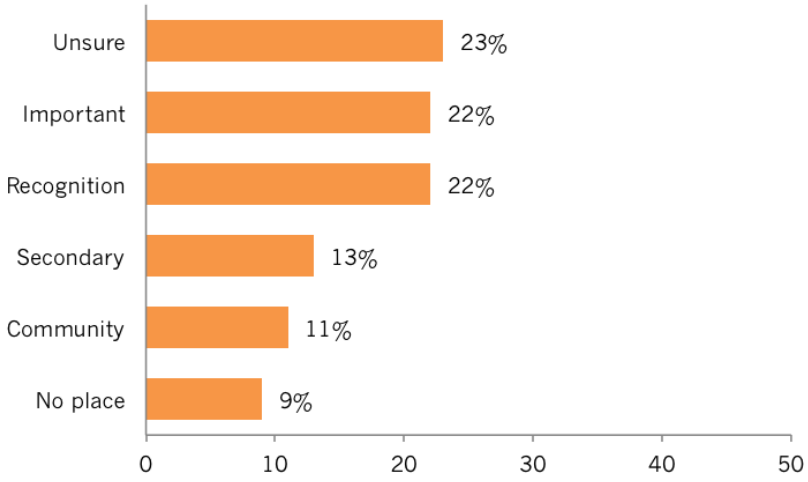
- **Secondary.** Recently developed Indigenous languages have some place but are secondary in importance to traditional languages. (13 per cent)
- **No place.** There is no place for recently developed Indigenous languages. (9 per cent)

These two, 'secondary' and 'no place', were mentioned more often by people who do not identify with these languages, being reported by 14 per cent and 10 per cent of these people, respectively.

Another category is 'community', mentioned by 11 per cent of respondents.

- **Community.** Recently developed Indigenous languages are primarily for the communities to which they belong.

Figure 5.9: Place of recently developed Indigenous languages within Australia as a whole (percentage out of 288 respondents)



Ambivalence regarding the place of recently developed Indigenous languages is also reflected in the responses about support for recently developed Indigenous languages (see Figure 5.10). Close to half of all respondents (45 per cent) answered 'unsure' when asked whether there is too much support for recently developed Indigenous languages. The remaining responses were evenly spread between 'agree' and 'disagree'—28 per cent agreed or strongly agreed while 27 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The above result suggests that the place of recently developed Indigenous languages is a controversial issue. Regardless, the survey data indicates that most respondents feel traditional languages are more important than recently developed Indigenous languages (see Figure 5.11). Sixty-seven per cent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that it is more important to be able to speak recently developed Indigenous languages than traditional languages, while only 12 per cent agreed. Nineteen per cent of respondents were unsure.

Figure 5.10: Responses to the statement, 'There is too much support for recently developed Indigenous languages such as Kriol, Yumplatok, or Aboriginal English' (percentage out of 288 respondents)

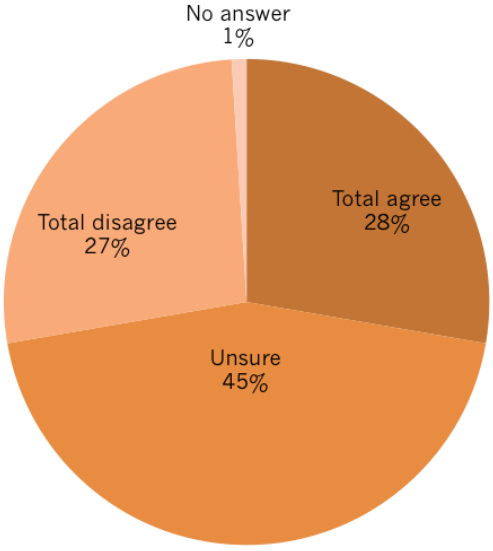
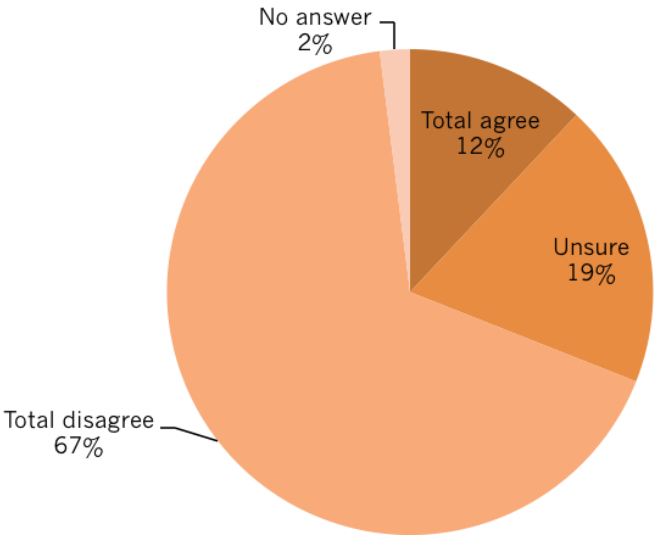


Figure 5.11: Responses to the statement, 'It is more important to be able to speak recently developed Indigenous languages such as Kriol, Yumplatok, or Aboriginal English than traditional languages' (percentage out of 288 respondents)



6 Key findings, discussion and recommendations

Chapters 2–5 presented the key findings against the four aims of the NILS2 project. This final chapter presents an overarching discussion of these findings and makes recommendations for future action. These recommendations are in keeping with those presented in the NILS1 report as well as the *Our land, our languages* report and have been advocated at numerous forums. In particular, we agree with Recommendation 4 of *Our land, our languages* (HORSCATSIA 2012) that the Australian Government should consider updating its action plan in order to implement the National Indigenous Languages Policy.

6.1 List of key findings

The following are the key findings, repeated from the previous chapters.

Language activities and actions

Language situation

- Some of the traditional languages considered to be 'very strong' are showing signs of decline.
- Some traditional languages are gaining more speakers. Mostly these are languages which have not been spoken for some time but have been gradually brought back into use.
- There are traditional languages which have a substantial number of full speakers and are in a stable state of vitality.
- There is great variety in the situations of traditional languages, but regardless of their situation all traditional languages are at risk of declining.
- Recently developed Indigenous languages, such as Kriol and Yumplatok, have the largest speaker numbers, in the thousands.

Language activities and actions

- The Language Activity Survey found that language activities are not just aimed at increasing speaker numbers and revitalising or maintaining languages, they are also about helping people to connect with language and culture and improving the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- The survey data indicates that key elements for the successful delivery of language activities are that community members are involved and committed, that there is adequate funding, and there is access to language resources.

- Many survey respondents have high ambitions for their language activities, with multiple goals, and they are carrying out these activities in a challenging environment, especially with regard to funding and skills.
- The survey data shows that there is a wide range of needs and demands in relation to traditional language, and people are delivering a wide variety of language activities throughout Australia. These include resource development, teaching, policy development, and promotion. However, more research is required to identify what language activities or language actions are most effective in what circumstances.
- Among activities surveyed there was only one instance each of master–apprentice programs and language nest programs despite the international literature indicating these are among the most effective programs. This may be changing, at least for the master–apprentice approach.[12]

Aspirations and attitudes towards Australian languages

- The survey data shows that traditional language is a strong part of Indigenous people's identity, and connection with language is critical for their wellbeing.
- Survey respondents were largely unanimous in their opinions about traditional languages: they want traditional languages to be strong well into the future; they want to have their language taught in school and feel that learning traditional language will help students succeed at school; they also want their languages to have better recognition within Australia. A large majority of respondents indicated that they feel it is okay for non–Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to learn traditional languages.
- The survey data indicates that active use and transmission of languages is the key to strengthening or maintaining traditional languages, while lack of opportunities prevents respondents from learning traditional languages.
- There were different opinions on recently developed Indigenous languages among survey respondents.

6.2 Discussion and recommendations

The NILS2 survey data indicates that a variety of language situations are found across Australia and there is no single common path that languages follow as they decline, gain strength or remain stable. But, regardless of the individual language situation, all traditional languages require support to address their particular needs if they are to be kept strong, and keeping languages strong is what survey respondents desire. Without measures in place, it is likely that these languages will lose strength rapidly or be unable to regain strength. Even languages which appear to be strong are showing signs of decline. A small number appear to be stable or gaining speakers based on the NILS2 data, but even these languages are changing or not all language knowledge is being passed on to younger generations.

But there is also positive news: several traditional languages which have not been spoken for some time are being brought back into use, ranging from some

[12] But see footnote 3 on page xiii

words being used with English, to cases where people are working to bring back more complex aspects of their language, developing speeches, welcomes to Country, and finding ways to incorporate their language into daily life.

Recently developed Indigenous languages such as Kriol and Yumplatok have the largest speaker numbers of all Australian languages and are spoken as a first language by a large number of people. This fact needs to be acknowledged by governments, service providers, educators and the wider public. Appropriate support should be given to these languages and their speakers, in particular in education, where children may be first-language speakers of one of these varieties, and also in the provision of services, where interpreter/translator support should be available.

The NILS2 project highlights the fact that traditional languages have an important place in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's lives. It also highlights the fact that recently developed Indigenous languages have gained a strong foothold in some regions. At the same time we emphasise that proficiency in Standard Australian English is crucial to successful participation in wider Australian society. However, these three realities need not be in conflict. This issue is discussed further in Section 6.2.6 'Recently developed Indigenous languages'.

6.2.1 Effective language work

As highlighted in the NILS2 data, traditional languages in Australia exist within a great variety of situations, and for measures aimed at strengthening or maintaining traditional languages to be effective they must address the individual situations of those languages. Recommendation 11 in the NILS1 report states that 'Language programs must be tailored to the type of language situation in the local community'. This recommendation is still relevant and highlights the need for a greater understanding of language programs. This is also strongly supported in *Peetyawan Weeyn*, a community guide for language programs published by the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (Paton, Eira and Solomon-Dent 2011).

For languages with full speakers, but where transmission to younger people has been interrupted, evidence from around the world demonstrates that two types of immersion programs, the master–apprentice program and language nests, have been particularly effective, especially where transmission of languages and nurturing of the next generation of speakers are the aim.

The master–apprentice program (Hinton 1994, pp. 235–247) was first developed in California in 1993 and has been taken up by many Indigenous groups, particularly in North America.[13] In this program a full speaker of an Indigenous language (the master) regularly spends time with a language learner (the apprentice) and communicates only in the Indigenous language. Thus, a master–apprentice program requires the involvement of full speakers, or at least part-speakers who can have conversations in some domains. Accordingly this program is only appropriate

[13] Hinton (1994) and (2001) provide background on the methodology, and detail numerous examples in North America. For a detailed discussion of the master–apprentice approach, see First Peoples' Cultural Council (2013b).

for languages with full or part-speakers and would be most appropriate for languages with at least a few full speakers. This approach enables the language to be transmitted to another, usually younger, person who develops their language skills to the point that they are able to take on the task of teaching the language to others. This program can take place at home, at work, or at any other place where the master and the apprentice can spend substantial time together using the language.

One example of this program currently operating in Australia is that run by the Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre in Kununurra, Western Australia, where it has been in place for some time (Olawsky 2013). In 2012 the Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity ran two 'train the trainer' workshops (one in Kununurra and one in Alice Springs) on the master–apprentice program, delivered by trainers from the United States to participants from across Australia, including some from language communities where there are no longer full or part-speakers. There is a need for ongoing support for those who have participated in such workshops, and assistance to continue practising and developing a program appropriate to the language situation and their community. This approach was supported in *Our land, our languages* (HORSCATSIA 2012, Recommendation 19).

The language nest is an immersion program which has seen much success in New Zealand and Hawai'i. In this approach Indigenous language speakers spend time in natural play with very young children, interacting with them in their language and thereby enabling natural language transmission. Typically the language nest takes place at a preschool or in child care. Although the language nest approach has usually been implemented for languages with full speakers, the method can be applied to languages with less proficient speakers, though the same results cannot be expected—the children can only be expected to acquire partial knowledge of the language.

On the basis of the international experience of these approaches being very effective in supporting the transmission of language,[14] the following recommendation is made.

Recommendation 1 Funding bodies should support communities that wish to implement master–apprentice and language nests programs. Community groups should be encouraged to consider these programs.

This was a key recommendation in the NILS1 report (AIATSIS/FATSIL 2005, Recommendation 1) and a similar recommendation was also proposed in *Our land, our languages* (HORSCATSIA 2012, Recommendation 12). Language nests are also strongly supported in the OCHRE (Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment) plan for Aboriginal Affairs recently developed in NSW (New South Wales Government 2013).

[14] For example, see: McIvor (1998); Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust (2013); 'Aha Pūnana Leo (n.d.); First Peoples' Cultural Council (2013a); Scarcia (2009).

The Language Activity Survey respondents reported that past activities included language nest activities across 22 different languages, and master–apprentice programs for 20 different languages.[15] Currently only one of each are reported to be running, so it is imperative to achieve a better understanding of these approaches and how best to apply them in Australia.[16] Although we can learn from the overseas experience it would be very valuable to have case studies carried out on language nest and master–apprentice programs in Australia, especially those involving languages without full speakers, as this is a new application of these programs. This could include collecting information on the 22 language nests and 20 master–apprentice programs reported to have previously been operating in Australia, as well as collaborative research with the programs currently operating, in order to develop a better understanding of the factors that support or challenge this program.

For languages with no full speakers, there is no particular program that has been found most effective. The NILS2 survey data shows that there is a wide range of language activities taking place in Australia in these situations, and in some areas traditional languages are gaining strength and speaker numbers as a result. It is yet to be seen, however, what language activities are most effective, and a study of the different types of language activities should be conducted. Of course, effectiveness depends on what goals have been set, such as an increase in the number of speakers or their level of proficiency. However, as shown in the key findings presented earlier, the central goal can be to connect people with culture and language, to increase the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, or to increase awareness of Australian languages. This means that 'effectiveness' has to be assessed with regard to the particular goals of the program.

Recommendation 2 A study of the different types of language activities should be conducted, especially to examine what types of activities might be suitable for what situations. The study needs to take into consideration the different language situations as well as the community's goals.

The recommended research could include case studies and would take several years; learning languages takes a long time. It may be comparatively easy to increase the number of speakers who can say several words and simple sentences. Taking it to the next level, though, to having conversations, even in limited situations, requires a lot of effort and time. So it can easily take a few years to see effective outcomes from language activities. The same also applies where goals involve cultural connectedness and/or wellbeing; for these also, significant change takes years.

[15] The authors are aware of the short-lived language nests that operated in Western Australia in the 1990s, but the report of previous master–apprentice programs is surprising and likely refers to the 'train the trainer' workshops held in 2012. See Florey and Olawsky (2013).

[16] Presumably more master–apprentice programs will be starting up in future as a result of the recent workshops.

The study results would help communities identify what types of language activities would be most suitable for their particular situation. While language work is carried out across a very diverse range of situations, case studies would enable the detection of correlations between situations, programs and effectiveness in achieving particular goals. This research would also help assessors of funding applications check whether proposed activities are appropriate to the applicant's language situation and goals.

However, it should be emphasised again that each situation is unique; there are a number of factors that need to be considered in developing a language activity plan and these will differ depending on the language and its community. Therefore, the study findings should only serve as a reference and not as a guideline. It should also be emphasised that no language activity can bring positive results to the community and its members if it is not community-led and planned around the interests of the community.

6.2.2 Healthy language, strong people and community

The NILS2 project found that the involvement of the language community in language activities is a key element for their success. The importance of community involvement underscores the fact that language and community are intimately connected; language strengthens not only the individuals but also the community. The survey respondents said that they conduct language activities in order to improve people's wellbeing and to help people connect with language and culture. This is supported by research in this area; for example, a 10-year study in central Australia found that 'connectedness to culture, family and land, and opportunities for self-determination' assisted to significantly lower morbidity and mortality rates (Australian Human Rights Commission 2009, p. 61). Other researchers—Biddle (2011) and (2012), and Biddle and Swee (2012)—have also found a clear link between language and wellbeing.[17] Apart from these few examples, there is very little research on the connection between language and wellbeing, and what has been done is mostly preliminary.[18] More research on the connection between language and wellbeing should be conducted, as this will strengthen the case for supporting languages and provide valuable information for health initiatives. It will also assist a more informed choice of language activity to achieve particular goals. The importance of the relationship between language and wellbeing or language and culture has been acknowledged by the government in statements such as, 'A strong cultural identity is fundamental to Indigenous health and wellbeing. Australian government initiatives that strengthen Indigenous culture and languages are essential for Closing the Gap'.[19]

[17] Another useful reference in this area is Phillips (2003).

[18] See McIvor, Napoleon and Dickie (2009) for a valuable review and analysis of the existing literature relating to the connection between language, culture and wellbeing in Canada, pointing to the lack of work specifically on the language–wellbeing connection.

[19] See Office for the Arts (2012a) for a link to the Ministry for the Arts fact sheet, which also includes references on wellbeing.

Recommendation 3 Further research into the connection between language and wellbeing is necessary. Organisations with a special interest in Indigenous health and wellbeing should consider funding studies to examine this issue.

6.2.3 Supporting mechanism for language actions

6.2.3.1 Funding

One of the key elements for the success of language activities highlighted by the NILS2 project is funding. Community organisations often struggle to secure funding for their language activities as there are limited funding opportunities for language work. The result is that many of the language activities surveyed are dependent on government funding, particularly from programs managed by the Ministry for the Arts. Only one state government, New South Wales, has dedicated ongoing statewide funding to traditional languages. Other states and territories could follow the New South Wales example; this was one of the recommendations made in NILS1 (AIATSIS/FATSIL 2005, Recommendation 5).

Recommendation 4 All Australian state and territory governments should provide dedicated ongoing funding for language work, especially targeting community-led language programs.

Languages can be used in a variety of domains and services, suggesting that there could be more potential sources of funding for language work. Language work can be combined with media, art or music projects; for example, recording the stories behind artwork in traditional language. Indeed, some language activities are funded by a program or funding source not specifically targeted at languages, such as the Indigenous Broadcasting Program and the Community Broadcasting Foundation.

There are other areas where language work can take place or be included. Since strong languages are an important component in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, health departments could consider ways to fund language programs and/or integrate language work into health programs. For example, evidence shows that young people who speak traditional languages are less likely to engage in high risk alcohol consumption and illicit substance use than those who do not (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011), indicating it could be worthwhile for some of the monies spent on alcohol and drug prevention programs to be directed to language programs. Another potential source of funding is the justice area. Strong social cohesion/connectedness, a sense of identity and self-esteem are widely held to be factors that reduce crime, so actions that strengthen these factors operate as preventive measures (Beecroft 2009). With many survey respondents saying that connecting with traditional language can help to strengthen their identity and self-esteem, learning language could be an

important support measure. For those who are in prison, language programs could be offered as part of the measures to reduce recidivism.[20]

Recommendation 5 The Australian Government should include allocation of funding to language activities as part of health and justice programs.

6.2.3.2 Human resources and training

The NILS2 project found that involving people with appropriate skills, for example in language work, teaching, or linguistics, is often difficult, and a factor that may affect the success of language activities. The project also found that language activities could benefit from training opportunities.

Training opportunities for language workers, like funding sources, are very limited. Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, Charles Darwin University, and fewer than half a dozen TAFE colleges offer formal training courses related to Australian languages and language work. Travelling to these locations for training is not an option for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. More training opportunities and support mechanisms for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to attend such training are required across Australia. Similarly, training opportunities for interpreters of traditional languages are very limited. Currently, the only such training is offered by TAFE South Australia.

There is also a limited number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are qualified teachers or teaching assistants. Even among those who are trained teachers there are very few who have had training in language work. Currently the University of Sydney is the only place delivering such training programs to those who have teaching backgrounds, through the Indigenous Languages Education Program.

Recommendation 6 The Australian Government, and state and territory governments should allocate funding for the development and delivery of programs to train language workers, interpreters and language teachers.

Similar recommendations were made in the NILS1 report (AIATSIS/FATSIL 2005, Recommendations 49, 50 & 51) and *Our land, our languages* (HORSCATSIA 2012, Recommendations 16, 17, 18, 26 & 27).

[20] The New South Wales Government is working to improve and ensure access to language materials and programs for Aboriginal inmates and detainees. One reason for doing this is that 'there is anecdotal evidence that suggests that connecting Aboriginal inmates and detainees with their culture lowers rates of re-offending' (New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs n.d.). An examination of this relationship could be incorporated in the language and wellbeing study proposed in Recommendation 3. Another possible source of funding is private companies; for example, BHP Billiton Iron Ore has provided funding to Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre to support a number of their projects. Private companies could consider developing reconciliation action plans incorporating support for community-led language programs (for information about the Reconciliation Action Plan program, see Reconciliation Australia (2005–2013)).

The maximum benefits of training are achieved only when there are employment opportunities to work as language workers or teachers. As more people undertake training there will be more demand for employment as language workers or teachers, and those who deliver language activities will require funds to recruit these people. With the forthcoming completion by ACARA of the Framework for Australian Languages, which will support the teaching of Australian languages in schools, there will be a greater need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with this training. If training only leads to unpaid work or to no work, people will be discouraged from undertaking the training. There is thus a need for the 'language industry' to develop, with promising career paths and decent wages.[21] The industry cannot develop and language activities will suffer if there is a dependency on the good will of people who are prepared to work for low wages or without pay.[22]

Not every type of language activity requires the technical skills that a linguist provides. For example, if an activity is to write a script in a traditional language for a radio program and if there are still full speakers, a linguist's advice is not necessarily needed (but this may require someone with literacy skills in the language). Some activities certainly do require a trained linguist, someone who has studied linguistics. Examples include an activity that requires language analysis for writing a learner's guide, or an activity that requires the interpretation of historical language records.

There are, however, not many linguists who are available for community language work. To begin with, the number of people with linguistic training is limited, and often linguists are employed by a university and engaged in academic research. This may limit their availability for community language work since such work does not necessarily result in academic publications, or contribute to building an academic reputation. There may be a lack of appreciation for community-driven research or language work among people who work in the university sector. Universities should acknowledge the importance of supporting community-driven research in their reconciliation action plans. They should promote the importance of designing research projects that meet community protocols and needs, and performance measures for researchers should recognise this type of community service.

There are currently very few trained linguists of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. The shortage of such people means that many communities are unable to find linguists locally. Often language centres, especially those in remote areas, have trouble finding linguists.[23] There is a lack of awareness of potential work as community linguists among linguistics students, which could be remedied

[21] One respondent of the Language Activity Survey reported that there were no employment opportunities for people who successfully completed a Diploma of Interpreting.

[22] The *Our land, our languages* report expresses concern over the dependency of language centres and projects on government funding and encourages the development of market opportunities for language centres (HORSCATSIA 2012, p. 200).

[23] There could be some reservation or barrier to Australian linguists of non–Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent engaging with a community because of colonial history.

by the promotion of Australian languages through internship programs. These programs could help students build an appreciation of Australian languages, which might lead them to consider a career as a community linguist.

Recommendation 7 Language centres and universities should cooperate to identify opportunities for students of linguistics to gain experience in working with community-led language programs. We particularly support the provision of scholarships for Indigenous students of linguistics.

It is important for community people to build their understanding of why linguistic knowledge is useful in certain types of language activities.[24] An appreciation for linguistic knowledge may also lead more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to consider studying linguistics. Finally, scholarships to support Indigenous students of linguistics would be a valuable way to support people in undertaking this study.

6.2.3.3 Language resources and archiving

The NILS2 project found that access to language resources is a key element for successful language activities. The survey shows that a number of resource production activities are taking place. These activities should be given priority, especially in the current context where the Australian Government is developing an Australian Curriculum framework for Australian languages, discussed in more detail below.

The production of language resources may involve retrieving recordings and documentation from archives. The AIATSIS collection contains an unparalleled amount of relevant historical documentation for Australian languages; however, most libraries and collections throughout the country will hold language materials. In addition there are significant holdings in international and private collections. Preservation of and access to old language material, as well as new material, is essential for current and future language work. Old analog language material needs to be digitised to ensure its preservation and future access.

Recommendation 8 All levels of government should allocate funding to collecting institutions which hold material on traditional languages for digitisation, preservation and access.

Not all language material is held in large collecting institutions; some is held by individual researchers or small organisations that do not have publicly available catalogues of their language collections. As a result, community people may not even be aware of the existence of some language material. It is important that information about such material becomes accessible. The NILS1 project started collating this information, although on a very small scale, and the NILS1 report

[24] Caffery (2008) found that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have undertaken linguistic training did not go on to do language work in their community. One of the reasons for this is lack of appreciation of linguistic skills among community members, particularly Elders.

recommended ongoing maintenance of this database (AIATSIS/FATSIL 2005, Recommendation 39). There are a number of bodies with the expertise to carry out this work, including the National Library of Australia and AIATSIS, the latter being best-placed due its existing archive holdings and as the host for AUSTLANG and OZBIB.

Recommendation 9 All levels of government should support projects to collate information about language material, particularly that held in small, local and private collections which may not be listed in public collection catalogues, and make the information available online. Ideally this would be done on a national level as a single project.

This would require collaboration from individual researchers; researchers should understand the value and importance of community access to language material and make information readily available.

Language activities may involve recording languages for the development of resources as well as archiving recorded material. For languages where there are still speakers and recordings are scarce, it is critical to record languages while speakers are available. This was also recommended in the NILS1 report (AIATSIS/FATSIL 2005, Recommendation 23).

Recommendation 10 The Australian Government, and state and territory governments should allocate funding to the recording of languages which are poorly documented.

It is equally important for recordings, as well as language resources developed from recordings, to be properly archived, again for preservation and access, as recommended in the NILS1 report (AIATSIS/FATSIL 2005, Recommendation 28).

Recommendation 11 Funding bodies for language activities should make it a condition of funding that a copy of any materials produced with their funding will be archived at AIATSIS. The importance of archiving materials should be promoted more generally to those who are running language programs.

A similar recommendation was made by the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs in *Our land, our languages* (HORSCATSIA 2012, Recommendation 30). The committee also emphasised the need for a central repository of language materials, with AIATSIS identified as having the potential to perform this role (HORSCATSIA 2012, p. 209).

It is also important that materials produced by language activities be shared. This enables other communities with the same language to avoid re-creating what has already been done, and gives other language groups useful materials to adapt or further develop rather than starting from scratch. This approach was supported in *Our land, our languages* (HORSCATSIA 2012, Recommendation 20).

6.2.3.4 Increasing opportunities to use traditional language

The NILS2 project found that the active use of language is key to keeping language strong. While this may seem a simple matter it points to a need to increase the opportunities for traditional languages to be used. Anyone who speaks a traditional language to some extent could start using it more often, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be encouraged to do so, particularly at home but also in other arenas. This does not necessarily require funding but primarily determination and commitment, and is something that can be promoted through various forums. This promotion could include suggestions for materials and methods to encourage greater language use and point to the ways in which people around the world are developing their own methods to pass on their languages, many of which are based in the home and family. A world expert on language maintenance and revival, Leanne Hinton, promotes the family and the home as the key element in the success of any revival project (Hinton 2013).

Recommendation 12 The Australian Government and language advocacy groups should widely promote the importance of using traditional languages at home, and especially with children.

Outside of the home, there are a number of ways to increase the use of traditional language: through media such as radio programs, TV programs, websites and newsletters/newspapers or through community events such as music and song writing workshops. These activities are already carried out by community people in some parts of Australia but require funding. The issue of funding was discussed above.

As recommended in the NILS1 report (AIATSIS/FATSIL 2005, Recommendation 8), governments could also take the initiative and support the use of traditional languages in the public domain and in government services. One such initiative is dual place naming. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may not be speakers often have knowledge of place names. Dual naming also helps to promote and build appreciation of traditional languages to the general public. Dual naming was recommended in *Our land, our languages* (HORSCATSIA 2012, Recommendation 3).

Recommendation 13 All levels of government should consult local communities to identify and implement appropriate measures that increase the use of traditional languages in local areas; for example, in dual place naming.

All levels of government could use traditional languages for communication with community members whose first language is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language, by employing translators and interpreters. This could not only increase the use of traditional languages but create employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and improve the quality and effective-

ness of communication. It is especially important that translators and interpreters be engaged where misunderstandings must be avoided at all cost; for example, in legal and health situations (HORSCATSIA 2012, Recommendations 23, 24, 25 and 26).

Recommendation 14 All levels of government should engage translators and interpreters of traditional languages for communication between governments and community people whose first language is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language, as well as in legal, health and other situations where effective communication is paramount.

6.2.4 Recognition

The NILS2 data indicated that recognition of traditional languages is of great importance to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. An extremely important step in this regard is the recognition of traditional languages in the constitution. This proposal was included in *Our land, our languages* (HORSCATSIA 2012, Recommendation 8) and was recommended by the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians (2012); we reiterate this recommendation.

Official recognition in the constitution and other areas of government is an important change that is desired by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and will provide a base for the support of more concrete actions. This recognition should come with commitment to the government's endorsement of the *United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples* (United Nations 2007). The Australian Government should implement this commitment by taking actions to support 'the right to revitalise, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions [...]' (United Nations 2007, Article 13).

Recognition also has to be fostered in the broader public sphere, not just within government. The government's 'closing the gap' strategy targets health, education and employment, bringing Aboriginal people closer to the standard of living enjoyed by most non–Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The gap could also be bridged by targeting other areas such as appreciation of traditional languages as part of Australia's unique national heritage, and building strategies that cultivate this appreciation among non–Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Recommendation 15 Traditional languages should be recognised in the Australian Constitution as the first languages of Australia. All levels of government should promote Australian languages as a fundamental part of the unique heritage of Australia.

Flowing on from this would be a variety of outcomes; for example, parliamentary recognition at all levels of government (recommended in *Our land, our languages*, HORSCATSIA 2012, Recommendation 3).

6.2.5 Traditional languages in schools

As discussed elsewhere in this report, preserving and strengthening languages is not simply about language as a means of communication, but also relates to its role in supporting a strong sense of identity, an ongoing connection to traditional culture, and improved wellbeing. The NILS2 surveys show that there is a widespread and strong view that traditional languages should be taught and used in schools.[25] School-based language programs are very popular, being the most frequently reported transmission activity, and identified by more than half of all respondents as a goal of their current language activity. The importance placed on schools as a site of activities to strengthen and maintain traditional languages is clearly shown by the fact that almost all respondents believe that traditional languages should be taught in schools. Importantly, the majority stated that the use of traditional languages in school also helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to succeed.

These strongly held views make clear that schools play an important role in supporting traditional languages and that in doing so they will be providing better support to their students. It is worth noting that a large majority of respondents feel okay about non–Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people learning their languages, so this should not be seen as an obstacle for school language programs.

As Lowe 2010 (and the papers following it) strongly attests, it is of great importance that language programs be based in the family and the community. But, while the home and the community remain the most crucial domains for language use and transmission, schools can play an important role as an additional place where languages are used and shown to be valued. As a controlled environment they can target particular languages for support, which is especially important for situations such as that of Anmatyerre, as discussed in Section 2.2.1, where an Indigenous common language (in this case, Warlpiri) may be starting to displace the local language. A number of states have developed programs that give traditional languages a place in schools; an important example is the development of the document *Framework for the teaching of Aboriginal languages in primary schools* (1992), which was implemented across Western Australia, and the more recent accreditation in that state of traditional (Aboriginal) language courses at secondary level (School Curriculum and Standards Authority 2013). All education systems in Australia now have substantial support to make this possible in the Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages, being developed by ACARA (the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority) as part of the Australian Curriculum.[26] This framework has been designed as a very broad approach that supports the development of language-specific curricula to target any Australian language, across three learner pathways:

[25] A detailed, if now somewhat dated, overview of the place of traditional languages in Australian schools can be found in Purdie et al. 2008.

[26] Detailed information is available at the ACARA website (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2013b).

First Language Learner Pathway: for students whose first language is an Australian language

Revival Language Learner Pathway: for students learning Australian languages which are in various stages of recovery and revitalisation (sometimes referred to as 'sleeping languages')

Second Language Learner Pathway: for students learning an Australian language as a second language.

Each pathway has distinctive elements and approaches. For example, for languages which are still being passed on to children, the best approach—adopted in the framework's First Language Learner Pathway—is for children to complete the crucial early years of education in their own, first language, while also being taught English (using an English as a Second Language approach).[27] Once the early education is completed and the students' English skills are at the appropriate level, it is possible to transition to English as the medium of instruction.[28]

Recommendation 16 All education systems should work together with Indigenous communities to implement traditional language classes in schools, and schools should work with local Indigenous groups and communities to develop appropriate ways to give recognition to the languages of their region.

Similar recommendations are found in NILS1 (AIATSIS/FATSIL 2005, Recommendations 5, 8, 10 & 49) and supported by *Our land, our languages* (HORSCATSIA 2012, Recommendation 11).

6.2.6 Recently developed Indigenous languages

The NILS2 project found a variety of opinions about recently developed Indigenous languages among the survey respondents. Although the survey responses indicate that these recently developed Indigenous languages, such as Kriol, Yumplatok and Aboriginal English, do not seem to have the same kind of emotional, spiritual and wellbeing-promoting impact as traditional languages, they are widely spoken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (especially children) as first languages. Speakers of Kriol, Yumplatok and other new languages must receive the necessary support to ensure they are fully able to participate in Australian society, programs and services. It is crucial that education departments, health bodies, government agencies generally, and so on, are aware of this and implement appropriate measures in their dealings with Indigenous people. To be specific, this includes (but is not limited to) the provision of: interpreter/translator services; appropriate education in the first language (i.e. bilingual education); health services; legal services; and effective education to ensure all children acquire a sound proficiency in Standard Australian English.

[27] Simpson, Caffery and McConvell (2009) provide an important discussion of this approach and its implementation in the Northern Territory.

[28] Research indicates the best time for this transition is around the end of primary school (Ouane and Glanz 2010).

Recommendation 17 Speakers of recently developed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages such as Kriol, Yumplatok and Aboriginal English should be given appropriate support, including interpreter/translator services and first-language education (bilingual education).

These languages should also be acknowledged by the general public. A common misunderstanding is that creoles (and other new varieties) are 'bad English'. This is not correct; although they can sound like a kind of English, creoles are in fact distinct languages and English speakers cannot understand them without learning them, just as with any other language. Aboriginal English is also frequently said, wrongly, to be 'bad English'; it is actually a variety of English that differs from Standard Australian English. As a language spoken across numerous different geographical, social and cultural domains, English has many varieties, such as Yorkshire English, American English, Irish English, and many more: Aboriginal English is one of them. Speakers of recently developed Indigenous languages should not be regarded as being unable to speak 'proper' English or as uneducated.

6.3 Coordination

6.3.1 A national approach

The results of the NILS2 project highlight the need for recognition, funding, training opportunities and access to language resources. But the maximum benefit both for languages and the people involved with them will only come if language work employs the coordinated approach advocated in the National Indigenous Languages Policy (Office for the Arts 2009). The NILS1 report recommended the establishment of a national Indigenous languages centre for this purpose and outlines the possible functions of such a centre (AIATSIS/FATSIL 2005, Recommendation 4). Currently, language activities are most often conducted independently of one another, and, although forums such as Puliima offer space to share experiences and exchange information among people who work on language activities, there is still a lack of coordination between language activities. Similar activities could be taking place or might have taken place in different parts of Australia without those involved knowling of each other's activity. Indeed, there is no register of language activities, and it was difficult to identify those who ran or are currently running language activities for participation in the Language Activity Survey. There is a great need for strategies that enable people working on languages to share their experiences and learn from each other, to minimise the duplication of work, especially when funding for language work is limited. In recent years, the advancement of new technology has allowed people to share platforms for language resources, but technology-based language resources are only one aspect of language work.

A national approach does not necessarily require the establishment of a new national body. Certainly *Our land, our languages* does not support the idea of establishing a new body (HORSCATSIA 2012, p. 198). However, a coordinating

role could be undertaken by an existing organisation or organisations. There are several organisations that could be considered for this role, such as the Ministry for the Arts or the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples. AIATSIS too is an organisation with the potential to undertake this coordinating role, working closely with the government, language organisations and the academic community, as it is Australia's premier archive for Indigenous language material, with connections to Indigenous communities and language organisations, as well as the academic community.

6.3.2 Tiers of language work

The NILS2 surveys, as well as experience from current practice, demonstrate the value of the coordinated approach described above. Under this approach there is a need for different tiers of language organisations. There should be three such tiers, as outlined in the NILS1 report: community language teams (AIATSIS/FATSIL 2005, Recommendation 2), regional language centres (Recommendation 3), and state/territory language centres (Recommendation 5), with each tier supporting the next.

Community language teams would be responsible for on-the-ground language activities and resource development for the traditional languages of the community. They should have at least one language worker working with linguists and senior language workers who are based at regional language centres. Those linguists and senior language workers at the regional language centres would provide on-the-job training to community-based language workers, as well as assisting their language work and offering professional support.

State/territory language centres would deal with state-level issues—for example, implementation of the Australian Curriculum–Languages—and would assist the regional language centres and community language teams with developing appropriate curriculum materials. They would also coordinate state/territory-level training and networking and would collate reports and information from the more local levels in order to monitor the state of traditional languages, enabling a decentralised, locally based approach to this activity (see Section 6.4 on the future of language status surveys).

Currently, there are several regional language centres across Australia and only one state language centre, in Victoria. None of these have ongoing funding. The roles of these different levels of language organisations need to be further defined, together with their relationship to each other.

Recommendation 18 The Australian Government should commission a project to develop a model for a coordinated approach to language work and a funding mechanism that supports this model.

This work would require the involvement of state governments and existing regional and state language centres.

6.4 Future surveys

The NILS2 project collected three types of information about Australian languages—language status, language activities and people's thoughts about Australian languages—with a hope that these types of information would help communities and governments to make future plans that support Australian languages. The results and outcome of the two surveys—the Language Attitude Survey and the Language Activity Survey:

1. identified the reasons why traditional languages are important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and, in turn, why there need to be more resources and action in order to strengthen or keep traditional languages strong. The results also show that recently developed Indigenous languages now have a strong presence and role among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and they need to be supported
2. called for more research on language activities (Recommendation 2)
3. revealed that collecting information about language situations was, as expected, very difficult.

The question now is whether there should be more surveys of Australian languages. It does not seem to be necessary to conduct another survey like the Language Attitude Survey, at least in the near future—it seems unlikely that people's view's about traditional languages, if not recently developed Indigenous languages, will change in the near future. A new survey of language situations also does not seem to be necessary or beneficial from the point of view of work on individual languages.

Many of the Language Activity Survey respondents found it difficult to answer questions about speaker numbers, proficiency levels and frequency of language use. This does not mean that they have no idea about the situation of their languages; they probably have a general understanding about their language situation, but not detailed statistics. It seems this is because detailed statistical information about the language situation is not essential for the planning and delivery of their language work. It could be more useful to know what others are doing and how, and what kind of language work is suitable for their situation (again, see Recommendation 2, a study of different types of language activities).

Policy makers may have a different view on this; in order to allocate funding and resources to Australian languages, they possibly need to have a good understanding of the overall situation of Australian languages, as well as each individual language. Those who do research on Australian languages may also be interested in such information, especially to identify which languages require urgent documentation. Thus, there may be discord between community interests and other parties' interests in terms of the need for a survey on language situations.

If a survey of language situations has to take place, a standard measurement for language vitality needs to be established first. The NILS2 project and its predecessor, the NILS1 project, took a similar approach to language proficiency and

use but did not use the same measurements. Both projects had questions about speaker fluency and frequency of language use in different age groups. But the descriptions of proficiency levels and frequency used in the two projects were not the same. The NILS2 project endeavoured to be clearer and more specific than NILS1. The measurement employed by the NILS2 project should be reviewed, with any necessary improvements made, and used as a standard measurement tool for surveys of language vitality in Australia.[29] Such a tool could also be used in reports on language projects (see below), and be promoted among linguists for use in presenting language vitality information in their publications.

The NILS2 survey data, like the NILS1 survey data, was dependent on the views of a limited number of people. It is extremely difficult for any individual to accurately assess how many language speakers there are, what age groups they belong to and what their proficiency levels are. If the government is to collect more accurate information, it is necessary to allocate sufficient resources. It appears that collection of accurate information can only be done by having all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people conduct an assessment of their own language proficiency and use. The most plausible instrument for this would appear to be the census. Conducting a separate survey of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals would probably be even more costly than adding a few questions to the census, and it would also first require locating all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals. Questions in the census could be formulated based on the standard measurement developed as above. A similar recommendation was made in the NILS1 report (AIATSIS/FATSIL 2005, Recommendation 24).

Even with a standard measurement it is difficult to ensure that all individuals understand it and answer census questions accordingly. As a result, the census information will have limited accuracy, as well as only being collected at five-year intervals. So, while census information would be valuable, similar information should also be collected through another avenue, especially through funding programs. For example, the application form for funding through the ILS program could contain questions about the number of speakers, speakers' proficiency levels, and frequency of language use in different age groups. Successful applicants could answer the same questions at the end of their funded project so that any change in language vitality could become evident. This would also obviate the need for the Ministry for the Arts to fund survey projects, with more money going to community-based language programs.

Of course, answering these questions on language vitality for the whole population of a particular language group is a difficult task, but at least when the information is compiled by the same organisation each time (NILS1 and NILS2 respondents were not necessarily the same organisations or individuals), one that is working with the language over a period of time, the data collected in the reports is comparable.

[29] UNESCO (2003) proposes additional metrics to assess language vitality, however, they do not propose any methodology for their application.

Here, however, one should remember that rapid increases in the number of speakers or rapid improvements in proficiency level cannot be *expected*, and a lack of increase between reports should not be taken as a failure of the activity. As mentioned above, language learning takes time, so it may be years before any increase or improvement takes place. This understanding should be made clear to funded bodies to reduce any concerns they might have about unrealistic expectations for rapid results. It also needs to be emphasised that not all language activities are about increasing speaker numbers, so other assessment measures should be developed and employed to assess outcomes of a language activity particular to its goals. Some goals may not be easily measurable or may take a long time to achieve, such as increased awareness among community members or the general public and improved wellbeing of community people.

In summary, if it is essential for the Australian Government to conduct a survey of language situations, the Australian Government should fund a project that reviews the NILS2 language proficiency and use measurement and develops a standard measurement. This should be employed by the census and the census should contain appropriate questions about language proficiency and use. The Ministry for the Arts and any other funding providers for language programs should also employ this measurement and require its use in reporting of funded projects. Further, more importantly, more research on language activities would be beneficial for community.

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