Response from the Consultant to the Wiradjuri Language Reclamation Project [John Rudder (M.A. Ph.D.)] under the direction of Stan Grant (AM), Director of the Project under the authority of the Wiradjuri Council of Elders.

Responses to the Terms of Reference

The Committee will inquire into and report on Indigenous languages in Australia, with a particular focus on eight subject areas.

1. The benefits of giving attention and recognition to Indigenous language

There are significant questions implied in this section of the inquiry which can be clarified by asking, "The benefits to whom?" Are they benefits to the Nation of Australia as a whole? Are they benefits to politicians in the eyes of their constituents? Are they benefits to the Indigenous speakers? or Are they benefits to all three?

They can be of benefit to all three as this submission demonstrates, in spite of the mistakes made in the past. **The recognition being given to Wiradjuri Language through Wiradjuri initiative** is currently having positive benefits for communities in NSW where people have supported the use of the language. This is far different from the negative attention of the past.

1.1. The history of giving attention to Indigenous Language in Wiradjuri Country, at least during the 1940s and 1950s, involved a deliberate attempt to destroy the language as adults were told repeatedly by "Welfare Officers", "if you speak your language, we'll take your kids." These threats aimed at the removal of the language appear to have been a deliberate attempt to destroy the last vestiges of indigenous identity and so dispose of the last remaining vestiges of resistance to the white invasion. This would then solve the "black problem" aimed at by the assimilation policy from 1937. The targets of that policy were apparently to be achieved by **giving attention to Indigenous languages.** Not until the 1967 referendum did this approach really begin to change.

The Wiradjuri people have a history of almost 200 years of intense Government and white "settlers" disenfranchisement since they attempted to repel the British invasion of their land. They as a nation have been subjected to massacre and abuse since the times of Governor Macquarie as the British sought to defend what they had taken.

1.2. In 1967 the Australian population overwhelmingly chose to stop the denial of the Indigenous peoples' existence and to indicate to all successive governments at all levels that they have a responsibility to give more than token attention to the dispossessed original citizens of this land.

1.3. The Wiradjuri Language Reclamation Project as a case study gives irrefutable evidence that there are positive benefits to whole communities, and not just to Indigenous people, to be gained by giving positive attention and recognition to Indigenous language. In our preparation of this response to the Committee of Inquiry, and under direction from Stan Grant (AM) concerning the Wiradjuri Project, I have been in discussions with schools, colleges and TAFEs across much of Wiradjuri Country. This covers and involves roughly a fifth of NSW. (**See Attachment One** on schools and Institutions where Wiradjuri language has been involved).

1.4. Giving attention to the Wiradjuri Language as a purely Indigenous initiative has given and continues to give a very strong message to the Wiradjuri people that there is a glimmer of hope that a better future is possible. This indicates to a disenfranchised people that it is possible to have a future where they are respected.

2. The contribution of Indigenous languages to Closing the Gap and strengthening Indigenous identity and culture

2.1. There are two separate issues in this section of the Inquiry. Quoting the "Closing the Gap" web site, "COAG has agreed to specific timeframes for achieving six Closing the Gap targets, relating to Indigenous life expectancy, infant mortality, early childhood development, education and employment."

All these goals are excellent and sound but they are dealing primarily with the surface results of the disenfranchisement. Beyond these are the less obvious but far deeper issues of identity, self-worth, powerlessness, deprivation and the heart-felt needs of the people themselves to be recognised and valued as human beings. These deeper issues can only be resolved as people are valued and encouraged to be who they truly are as human beings with all their unique capacities.

2.2. Language is an embodiment of and expression of any people's cosmology (their unique understandings of how the world works) and hence of their own tools to define who they are. Thus language is one major aspect of identity.

The English language embodies an emphasis on a material existence and its quantitative measurement. This measurement is done along continuums of many kinds including such as size, importance, change, value and cost and evaluates humans on the same kinds of scales. Western identity is evaluated by using continuums of these kinds. Indigenous people have been given recognition and honour in the sports, athletics, and arts fields for what they can do but rarely for their intellectual capacities nor for the unique qualities of their languages.

Australian Indigenous languages embody an intense emphasis on relationships that do not change and which are discovered and recognised as having always existed between people, and between people and the natural world. Discovering such relationships is not simply a matter of following the accepted western classificatory systems. Discoveries include the unchanging relationships between individuals and between people and every element of the natural environment which have, by definition, always existed. This discovery process is extended to relationships with non-Indigenous humans, and to all parts of the physical environment and is then evaluated in accordance with their maturation within those unchanging relationship categories. An Indigenous person's identity itself is evaluated in terms of all those relationships. This is best expressed in indigenous language.

As the language is honoured, the core vehicle of identity is honoured. The person regaining access to his or her own language gains a new degree of self-

respect and is enabled to respond to the world around them with a positive attitude, to see the opportunities around them and to stand without the inherited shame.

Shame in Indigenous society is toxic. It includes the inherited shame of being powerless, of being different, of failing, of being disregarded, excluded and of no consequence and in some cases, of standing out beyond their peers. Thus the restoration of language is bringing about a new dignity to the individual who automatically becomes a contributor in society instead of a dependent on it.

2.3. The ability to communicate cross-culturally and with the wider society is dependent on the freedom to communicate fully with one's own peers. Only then is one empowered to communicate freely outside one's own culture. Amongst the Wiradjuri, numbers of those who are just at the beginnings of reclaiming their language are finding that they are also discovering their own self-worth for the first time. (see Point 2.5 below and Attachment One)

2.4. Many of the men are incarcerated in prisons, often because of their own self-destruction on the grounds of grief, rejection and shame or because of their rebellion against an unjust system or both. They have not yet been able to be reached with any consistency with the language programs because even men outside are only just beginning to feel the positive effects and it has not yet impacted large numbers of them. It is to be hoped that more men and adequate means will become available in the near future.

2.5. Contributions **being made by the Wiradjuri Language Program.**

We include some brief details of one man's story here. More extensive details of the range of schools, high schools and TAFEs within Wiradjuri Country and the effects of the program on communities (affecting both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities) are included in Attachment One.

[redacted] of Parkes has described himself as a man who was living unemployed, going fishing, banging his head on the wall trying to find work and with no future. He was so down he couldn't even face going to the mail box to check if there was anything in it. He was invited to attend a Wiradjuri language class. He says that since that time, and involvement with the language, he has changed to being one who can stand up and make public speeches.

[redacted] has so changed he now facilitates the adult Wiradjuri Language class in Parkes, has encouraged three of the young Wiradjuri adults to take up the task of teaching the language. One at a time he has facilitated the three of them into respected positions teaching in three primary schools and the high school in Parkes. They in turn have become so enthusiastic with life that the three of them applied for scholarships as teacher trainees and all three of them were accepted to start that training in 2012.

The ramifications of this one man's transformation are becoming apparent across both Indigenous and non-Indigenous sectors of the Parkes community. For further results of the introduction of Wiradjuri language in Parkes, see the reports in attachment One from the deputy principal of Parkes Primary School and from [redacted]

[redacted] who was principal of Parkes East Primary School when the language was first introduced to that school in 2005.

3. The potential benefits of including Indigenous languages in early education

3.1.Young children have a natural delight in learning about and exploring their world. The world of the mind and of language and the use of words is a fascination to them. They simply love exploring new words and stretching their minds. This fascination is easily damaged in the home and in the community. The introduction of new languages through songs, games and enjoyable experiences sets the pattern of learning in other domains and sets and secures languages as a means to enjoyment and of education as a thing of delight instead of as an invasion from outside. Wiradjuri language action songs are beginning to be used in some pre-schools and it appears from the literature that bilingualand multilingual little children have a range of advantages.

3.2. Students from Wade High School in Griffith participated in a cross-age tutoring program with the local Wiradjuri preschool. This involves teaching young children the language and also helps them with their English skills. (See Terms of reference 7.3.3.)

4. Measures to improve education outcomes in those Indigenous communities where English is a second language.

4.1. It is often assumed that Indigenous communities in NSW as a whole speak the same English as non-Indigenous people. This is a false assumption. The home language is often a dialect of English that is based in Indigenous thought patterns and frequently influenced by cultural norms associated with authority structures, patterns of feeling shame when one stands out above ones peers and inherited abuse and understandings of lack of value or worth as human beings that have been imposed on the communities for 5, 6, or more generations by non-Indigenous people and governments who have deprived them and abused them as unworthy.

The same basic human needs apply in these communities as apply in any situation of abuse and particularly where this is associated with deprivation. Where people are honoured through the honouring of their own language it triggers understandings of self-worth. Where that language is not fully learned because of an imposition of another language the individuals capacity to use any language can be seriously deprived. Full fluency in one's own mother tongue brings with it an understanding of the capacity of language itself. It also brings with it an appreciation of the different subtle capacities that are possible to achieve in a subsequent language.

Where the English spoken by an Australian of any origin is denigrated humiliation ensues. Where the attempts to speak (and to write) English are encouraged without condemnation the individual learns more quickly. What has been particularly noticeable in the NSW Primary and High Schools where Wiradjuri Language is being honoured and encouraged is that student results in all school subjects are being affected positively (See section 5 and Attachment One

4.2. Experiences observed with the Yolngu in North East Arnhem Land.

These experiences are relevant to the question but not to the Wiradjuri program and so have been recorded as a separate attachment (see Attachment Two).

5. The educational and vocational benefits of ensuring English language competency amongst Indigenous communities

In Australia with the national language being English, competency in the language is essential when dealing with the outside world. However destruction of, or deprivation in, a "mother" tongue appears to reduce capacity to grasp the full potential of the person's way of thinking and communicating. This indicates that such loss causes far more difficulty for the individual to become aware of the communicative capacity of any other language without positive assistance and very strong motivation.

When "English language competency" is imposed in any way, the result is abusive and discourages the "learning" process. When it is made available with courtesy, encouragement and consideration the results can be positive.

See Attachment Two for a negative example of "ensuring" English language competency.

6. Measures to improve Indigenous language interpreting and translating services.

This is as vital a program amongst the people who still maintain constant use of their languages in indigenous communities as it is among migrant communities whose mother tongue is not English. It is being effectively used in Arnhem Land but not yet of significance in NSW.

What would be of use in the Southern states would be a program to educate members of the legal fraternity regarding cultural and sociological differences in the use of English language. These differences are causing huge problems that are often ignored or remain invisible particularly in Indigenous peoples' relations with the legal system.

7. The effectiveness of current maintenance and revitalisation programs for Indigenous languages.

7.1. A condensation of the progressive development since 1998 of the Reclamation of Wiradjuri Language under the Direction of Stan Grant Senior (AM) and the Wiradjuri Council of Elders

This is an Indigenous inspired and Indigenous directed program based on Indigenous initiatives. It has been partially funded by various government bodies and partially by others. Its aim is to fully revitalise the language. This program is already having a very positive effect in most of the communities where it is being taught. It started from a language that was no longer spoken because of previous governments' initiatives to stamp it out.

7.2. Background to the Wiradjuri Language Reclamation/ Revitalisation Project

On first meeting Stan Grant Senior in 1998, I responded to his vision of reclaiming the Wiradjuri language by saying I could help him if he liked. He chose to accept that offer and we have worked together on that dream ever since.

The process has broadened my own understandings through confrontation with the effects on Aboriginal people of the ongoing invasion. Having spent almost 16 years in Arnhem Land amongst a people who still had their identity, culture and language intact, and whose language I could speak, I have now spent another 13 years with the Wiradjuri people and seen the contrast of their situation with almost nothing left of their culture or language beyond family relations and memories.

For the duration of the project, Stan has chosen directions for, and successive stages of, research, the ways to tackle problems, the outreach to communities. I have facilitated research, the production of materials and their publication. This has meant that the project has remained entirely a Wiradjuri one. The teachers in all school classes except the first primary School Pilot Class have all been Indigenous people supported by teachers in the schools. In that first pilot school the teacher was quickly able to involve Indigenous people taking over the teaching in their school.

When we began work, we heard rumours continually that there were some people who still had Wiradjuri language but we never found any who had remembered as many as twenty or thirty words and only rarely did anyone have more than a few that could be remembered. What was impressive about those words still remembered was that they were still being pronounced with a true Aboriginal pronunciation using the Indigenous sound patterns that are not found in English.

7.1.2. Progressive Development

Our first 12 months were spent on the collection of old word lists and whatever other Wiradjuri Language oriented material we could access from archives (particularly those held at AIATSIS). We then worked together on analysis of 700 sentences collected and recorded by missionaries in 1830s and later by two others.

Stan and I spent the whole of the first year analysing the sparse materials available and working on the collection, analysis and development of materials that could be found in the archives, (particularly those in the AIATSIS Library). The greatest treasures were the two collections of 300 sentences each and one of 114 sentences. These sentences together with approximately 5000 words and three partial grammar analyses were listed in the records made by early missionaries and some men of goodwill. We also built on and extended the more recent work by Hosking and McNicol.

The project began officially with a presentation of the concept and possibilities to the Wiradjuri Council of Elders and their approval of both the language project and the alphabet selected to match the specific Wiradjuri sound patterns.

In the beginning years of the project almost all teaching of the language was done by Stan Grant and myself. First this was done at weekends around Wiradjuri country and weekly with an evening class in an allocated unused school room in Canberra.

We prepared basic introductory materials and In 1999 Stan initiated weekend tours of Wiradjuri Country to as many as three Communities each weekend to introduce what we had developed. This built the dream that reclamation of the language was possible as we ran introductions to the language

The original Wiradjuri country formed a rough quadrilateral with the corners at Gilgandra, Lithgow, Albury and Hay. While they have become dispersed much further, this it still considered to be Wiradjuri Country. We covered a lot of miles together to meet with them. In this way Stan built the dream. At the same time we began weekly evening classes in Canberra.

As Wiradjuri parents always looked hopefully to their children's future, they responded enthusiastically to the presentation of Wiradjuri language children's songs, colouring and drawing books for their children, and to phrases that enabled them to greet each other in the language. These gave rise to a stronger hope for their children's future and began to lift community understandings of the possibilities. In a number of cases adults began to learn language from the materials we had developed and some adults began to pick up words, phrases and new vocabulary.

Slowly we moved to whole day workshops, then to whole weekends and finally to four-day or five-day intensive workshops in central locations. People began to realize that the language still existed and a number began to work seriously on learning it on their own using the texts and CDs we began to produce.

A heart desire to restore their children's heritage led to a desire to have the language taught in schools.

In a number of communities, small groups of adults began to meet together to learn the language using the materials that we continued to prepare. In an

unorganised way several people gained permission to introduce some small aspects of Wiradjuri language into schools. Not all had enough experience to continue with the language classes but the schools began to see the advantages that were gained and to find ways and means of supporting the idea. Popular in many places have been the language songs we had written and recorded and "welcomes to country" that were learned and are being popularly used all over Wiradjuri Country.

The deputy principal of Forbes North Primary School saw the possibilities of the language in their school while attending one of our workshops and when the State body was looking for a pilot school, she, with support from the principal, chose to volunteer as the pilot teacher for the NSW Board of Studies, by teaching language in their school starting with the children in her class.

Since those early beginnings, Wiradjuri has begun to be taught in a number of schools in Wiradjuri country and is proving to be both popular and producing some surprising sociological results in parts of Wiradjuri Country. Several adults have completed Masters Degrees in Australian Languages through courses at Sydney University and Stan Grant continues to be the active Director and encourager of the project. I (John) have largely withdrawn from travelling so I could concentrate on the development of a better dictionary and grammar than the ones we first produced.

Wiradjuri is now being taught in a number of towns and schools across Wiradjuri communities. See Attachment One for some details of these.

7.3. Effectiveness/ Results of the Wiradjuri Language Restoration/ Reclamation/ Revitalisation Project

Two TAFE colleges have been involved in the project now for several years.

Six secondary schools or institutes and twelve primary schools have started Wiradjuri classes with the first ones starting in 1975. As I only became aware of this in late November, only a limited number of people have been able to give feedback on their observations before schools closed for the Christmas break.

The following are the reports on the results of the introduction of Wiradjuri that have been received about the progress in the schools since our investigation into finding the results began

7.3.1. [redacted] was Principal of the Parkes East Primary School when the language was first introduced to that school in 2005. Bill is now retired in Parkes. He wrote as follows:

Some anecdotal comment for use in your indigenous languages submission

<u>Results</u> of introducing Wiradjuri Language in the School

1) During my time as Principal at Parkes East Public School, after the introduction of Wiradjuri Language K-6 in the second and subsequent years of the language program there was a marked increase in the number of families identifying as Aboriginal within the school community. I attributed this increase to the removal of a social stigma associated with Aboriginality that had existed for many years. Children were openly expressing acceptance of Wiradjuri

language and culture. They took aspects of the language home, taught their parents, relatives and siblings.

2) The Wiradjuri language program had a significant result in the reduction and proactive removal of racism in the school community. This was evidenced by the significant number of Anglo Saxon participants in the town Naidoc march and subsequent celebrations during the years 2007/8/9. Participants in the march included parents and children from across all schools in Parkes that are involved in the Wiradjuri language program.
3) The Wiradjuri language Program has proved to be very popular in schools. As principal of Parkes East Public School I experienced no dissention or requests for exemption during the total program delivery. Wiradjuri language is used as the instruction and greeting language during all school functions. This has allowed the personal development of pupil and parent pride in Wiradjuri Language and culture. I personally has received no racism taunts or complaints as the Principal and antiracism co-ordinator for the school.
4) Since the introduction of the Wiradjuri Language program at Parkes East Public School during the time that I was Principal of the school there has been a significant expansion of Aboriginal parents and community involvement in the school's activities and functionality. This involvement has again lifted the attitudes, school climate and education perceptions of the availability of success for each student, success breeding success and the school having the ability to organise that success.
5) At Parkes East Public school **the removal of shame as an expectation for achievement** has resulted in an Aboriginal (Wiradjuri) student becoming Dux of the school then progressing through High School to become School Captain and represent the town of Parkes in State, youth parliamentary leadership activities.
6) At Parkes East the number of parents accepting the Wiradjuri Language concept has improved involvement in goal setting, aided school pupil information for staff and the implementation of Individual Education Plans for Aboriginal Students.
7) The Wiradjuri language program in Parkes has witnessed the development of parent and community as well as Indigenous Language teacher skills and knowledge in Wiradjuri language. This language was thought to be lost, but has been successfully resurrected in recent years. Adult classes have been conducted both for personal interest and accreditation purposes. A number of certificate level 3 have been successfully assessed, and study paths have been established with Charles Sturt University.
8) Involvement of the Aboriginal Community in "Closing the Gap" discussions and activities has expanded from nil to approximately 45% in the consultation part of the program. I attribute this to the removal of barriers by programs like the Wiradjuri Language Program that functions in Parkes Schools. This

participation and leadership development is evident and indicates the development of a pleasing skill set.

9) Most people believe the Wiradjuri language was lost due to European oppression and refusal to tolerate the language. Many older Aboriginal people refused to speak the language to please European acceptance or evade punishment in those times. Some Wiradjuri people appear to have retained some of the language as a hidden culture. This was evidenced by [redacted] at a Wiradjuri Council of Elders meeting in Wagga, when in the quiet time at the end of the dinner some of the Women Elders were quietly singing childhood songs in Wiradjuri Language.
10) During 2007/8 children from Parkes East Public School after a junior Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) meeting wrote to the Parkes Shire Council with a request that the Shire erect Welcome Signs to Wiradjuri Country on the Newell Highway at both ends of the Shire. Parkes Shire Council erected the requested signs. A Wiradjuri Artist supplied the art work as a donation and the students involved in writing the original submission attended the official unveiling of the signs.

7.3.2. Response to the Committee of Enquiry from the Deputy Principal of Parkes Public School

Parliamentary Committee of enquiry on the value of teaching Aboriginal languages

The benefits of giving attention and recognition to Indigenous language

At Parkes PS it gives the opportunity for the school to employ an indigenous language tutor who is well respected by the whole school community. The tutor also assists with other Aboriginal programs operating in the school. He is also a mentor to some of the indigenous boys and a positive male role model in our school. The tutor's presence in our school gives Aboriginal parents the confidence to come into our school and help with programs in which he is involved and he acts as a mediator between the school and community. Our tutor does more in our school than teach Wiradjuri and he is wonderful to work with and always professional.

The students seem to enjoy learning the Wiradjuri language and about the culture, focusing on the three main outcomes of Using Language, Moving Between the Cultures and Making Linguistic Connections. The language is also linked to HSIE and Science units and taught in alignment with a scope and sequence across the year, so all schools teaching language in Parkes are learning the same topics.

The teachers have requested word banks be displayed in the classrooms to help students learn the language. The students have been provided with Wiradjuri dictionaries and currently the tutor is producing a sentence book to help the students learn the language and speak in sentences.

Response from the Consultant to the Wiradjuri Language Reclamation Project [John Rudder (M.A. Ph.D.)] under the direction of Stan Grant (AM), Director of the Project under the authority of the Wiradjuri Council of Elders.

The contribution of Indigenous Languages to Closing the Gap and strengthening Indigenous identity and culture

- Closing the Gap between indigenous and non-indigenous student's literacy and numeracy skills – our school's indigenous students are still below the state in Naplan results, but the results vary from year to year depending on the cohort
- Identity and culture are being strengthened through the teaching of language and linked to the scope and sequence so language is being taught in a methodical fashion across the stages and topics
- Display of artwork and wordbanks in the classrooms/school strengthens identity and culture
- Awards presented on Presentation night to students from each class for language promotes the value of teaching language
- Our tutor delivering the Welcome in Wiradjuri at assemblies and functions during the year promotes respect of the indigenous culture

The potential benefits of including Indigenous languages in early education

- The students are more receptive to learning when they are young and they can learn language through mastery over several years. Our current Yr 6 students started learning Wiradjuri in Year 2 and they are becoming quite fluent speakers with common greetings and word recognition. It takes quite a while to learn a language, so 1 lesson per week allows students to learn at a steady pace, but it takes longer, than if they were using language every day (which is not possible given the demands of the KLA's needed to be taught and the school curriculum)
- The students learn to respect the indigenous culture and understand a different language

Measures to improve education outcome in those indigenous communities where English is a second language

- In our school population no students identify as ESL to Wiradjuri, English is their main language
- Literacy programs need to be implemented into those communities where ESL occurs to ensure students are given the opportunities to develop their English skills whilst valuing their own language.
- Bilingual programs would need to be developed in ESL schools

The education and vocational benefits of ensuring English language competency amongst Indigenous communities

- Adults in our community have studied Wiradjuri Cert III at TAFE to qualify them to teach language at our Parkes schools. Doing this course has created employment for three indigenous adults in the Parkes School communities. The tutors meet each week to support each other in the teaching of language in our schools. They also meet on Monday nights as a support group with other adults who have done the course, but don't necessarily teach the language.

- The tutors in our school have been trained in other literacy programs such as Rocket Reading, Multi-lit and Norta Norta to work with students struggling with literacy

Measures to improve Indigenous language interpreting and translating services

- As we have no students or indigenous ESL adults in our school community interpreting and translating is not an issue

The effectiveness of current maintenance and revitalisation programs for Indigenous languages

- It is imperative in our school that we receive funding each year to run the Wiradjuri language program and the level of funding determines how many classes can be involved in the program. To date we have been fortunate to secure adequate funding each year to teach language to K – 6 students. Without this funding and to rely on school funds would be to the detriment of teaching other literacy and numeracy programs in our school, so the language lessons would probably suffer.

The effectiveness of the Commonwealth Government Indigenous language policy in delivering its objectives and relevant policies of other Australian governments. (Its extremely limited budget)

- Making language Cert III available at the TAFE level is wonderful as it allows adults to learn the language so they can feel confident to teach language in schools
- The funding is available to schools teaching language which is great, but you never know from one year to the next if you can secure the level of funding you need to run the program effectively
- Therefore you can not offer job security to the language tutors year in year out
- There is very little ongoing training at the school level unless you have staff willing to facilitate language support groups in the school to develop resources and teaching programs.
- Not all language groups seem to have the same level of support, and Wiradjuri, although it covers a large area of NSW has very few teaching resources available, which is why our tutors meet each week to help one another

7.3.3. From [redacted], Head Teacher English, Wade High School, Griffith NSW

This information has been compiled by me and a Year 9 student called [redacted]

Outcomes for students:

- The Wiradjuri program has allowed [redacted] to learn his own language and his fellow students to learn about Wiradjuri language and culture.

- [redacted] (and other students) gained confidence to deliver Welcome to Country in front of a large audience in Wiradjuri language
- [redacted] **and fellow students participated in a cross-age tutoring program with the local Wiradjuri preschool.** This involves teaching young children the language and also helps them with their English skills.
- This program has given the students pride in the community to be a Wiradjuri student at Wade High School

Outcomes for the school:

- This program has made Wade High School a more inclusive place and according to Bradley there is less racism towards Aboriginal students
- Because all of the seven Year 7 classes learn Wiradjuri (indigenous and non-indigenous students) there is more understanding of Wiradjuri culture and how Wiradjuri people live now and in the past
- Welcome to Country has been taught in Wiradjuri and is delivered at all school events
- Wade High School has been acknowledged and recognised for Excellence in Aboriginal Education by the local Aboriginal Education Consultative group
- Cross-age tutoring has fostered connections between schools

Outcomes for the community:

- Welcome to Country has been delivered by our students for community organisations such as TAFE, the Wiradjuri preschool, and community NAIDOC Week events
- Elders have delivered Welcome to Country in English at community events and our students have stood alongside them to repeat it in Wiradjuri language
- Links with Wiradjuri preschool, the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
- Regeneration of language in the lives of students and families

7.3.4. From Narrandera High School indigenous staff

[redacted] is **Language Teacher** He has done Cert 4 through TAFE

[redacted] links to the school under TAFE auspices and TAFE Funding. [redacted] is a league player in a local community team. [redacted] made the observation that the results are proving very positive. Kids who know the language have developed an interest in using the dictionary and are learning spontaneously. As their self-attitude begins to change, children who had been struggling in English and are now "doing language" are making fast progress, their English has improved as a feedback from the interest in language and the children are engaging in learning and therefore are improving in all areas. For example, the spontaneous interest in the Wiradjuri dictionary that was simply left at the front of the class where anyone could use it has expanded to students using the English dictionary.

[redacted] (Aboriginal Education Officer) made the following comments on the results of teaching Wiradjuri Language in the High School:

- The program is changing the children's personal confidence.
- Children are gaining confidence in who they are.
    - Re-engaging them in education.
    - Linking also to art and dance.
- One ex-student at the indigenous awards, now in his 20s, was incorporating language in his speeches.

Now the young people have a pride in and an awareness of who they are and are no longer demoralised by others. When they are put down, they are changing so they can come back with a sensible response that deflates the whole situation instead of using aggression.

7.3.5 Narrandera High in its website report indicates that

Narrandera High School is a rural comprehensive secondary school of 300 students, 25% of whom are Aboriginal.

The Low SES School Communities National Partnership funding has enabled the school to employ additional executive and specialist staff, including an additional Deputy Principal, a generalist teacher, an English/Arts teacher and several part-time teachers. The funding has also facilitated closer links with TAFE and community organisations.

The school identified the need to target writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation and all aspects of numeracy with Aboriginal students in Years 7– 9. The recommendations also included celebrating student achievement, increasing community participation and developing an appreciation of the Wiradjuri culture.

The additional staffing has enabled the following major strategies:

- personal and professional support for Aboriginal staff to gain accreditation with the NSW Institute of Teachers
- a partnership with the local TAFE and university to broaden the curriculum for Stage 5 students
- a partnership with the local TAFE for the school-based Wiradjuri language program (Certificate I and II), for Years 7-9, and
- the establishment of the “Boys’ Shed” artefact workshop

Results:

The 2010 evaluation showed improvements in the NAPLAN reading and writing growth rate for targeted Year 9 Aboriginal students and in the literacy skills of Aboriginal students undertaking the Certificate 1 and 2 Wiradjuri language course.

There was an increase of 5% in Aboriginal student attendance from 2009-2010 and a 5% increase in retention rates from Years 10-11 which exceeded the school’s target. 100% of Aboriginal students enrolled in Year 10, 2009 returned to school for Year 11, 2010. This was a significant achievement as the previous averages were 40-65%

from 2007- 2009. The evidence also suggests that there is a strong focus on working in a partnership with the home and the community to improve the school and the learning outcomes of students.

8. The effectiveness of the Commonwealth Government Indigenous languages policy in delivering its objectives and relevant policies of other Australian governments.

8.1.Commonwealth Languages Policy

It is somewhat early to assess the effectiveness of the Commonwealth Government Indigenous languages policy. As it has so recently come into existence, there is no real possibility of seeing any changes in the situation.

8.2. NSW State Government policy on Aboriginal Languages

8.2.1. Duration and stability

In NSW, policies on Indigenous peoples have existed in written or unwritten forms for over 200 years and have varied from support to extermination according to various sociological pressures. Our experience for the last 15 years shows that it has been possible to gain support for some projects, sporadic support for others, yet wherever something positive has happened governments are quick to claim involvement.

8.2.2. Obtaining funding allocation

Considering that everything that English-speaking Australians currently count as assets has been gained as a result of disenfranchising Aboriginal People, separating them from all of their original assets, and then adding insult to injury by saying "Sorry" as some kind of restitution, it appears that governments have allocated an extremely limited budget and low level priorities to Indigenous Australia.

8.2.3. Difficulties

One of the biggest difficulties for any positive initiative taken by Indigenous people is the government's apparent non-commitment to ongoing funding. When this is combined with the complexities of writing proposals for projects within the structures of public service language, a large percentage of the indigenous population is again disenfranchised.

There has been some funding for the development of materials for the Wiradjuri Language Development Project. There has also been some funding

to provide travel expenses and support for salaries for staff, though the amount available would not encourage most people to do the work. Any other funding has appeared to be at the whim of whoever, without any ongoing commitment to the overall project. There has been minimal direct funding to the Wiradjuri Project for two persons, some for preparing materials and some for teaching across approximately a fifth of NSW. Funding received by others working on the Wiradjuri project has apparently been scavenged from whatever and wherever they can find it.

The same funding difficulties appear to apply to many projects that are designed to fit what could generally be described as **community development** projects. These are projects that, like the language programs, **do not** produce quick showy results but are aimed at lifting whole groups of people at the deepest levels of individual and community, including the strengthening and encouragement of personal identity and dignity, and family and community cohesion.

Funding frequently appears to be given for short-term projects that **do** produce quick showy results, seemingly attracting attention to the politicians responsible for the funding bodies and giving short-term encouragements to the people involved. Some is also made available for government initiatives to meet emergency situations that would not have existed if the deeper level long-term needs of the communities were dealt with, with wisdom.

We have not found anywhere in Wiradjuri Country a situation where adequate funding at any level can be consistently relied upon.

There has been a continuum of changing policies and lack of recognition of true Indigenous authority structures.

One of the most difficult ongoing government requirements for many Indigenous people is to follow submission procedures which bear no relation to the structures that they are familiar with. The result is that those people who have initiative can be greatly restricted in their effectiveness.

One of the requirements is to write endless reports and/or applications for funding that destroy or severely restrict the initiatives of those doing the work. These are obviously necessary for governments to be able to justify expenditures but this process means that there is no guarantee that effective work can continue unless it is done voluntarily. One difficulty for applicants is that no explanations of the public service's negative decisions on applications are given and most positive decisions come with strong restrictions and reduced budgets. Further, there is no feedback on obligatory reports. There remains the implication that the entire project must be completed on limited funding or no more funding.

The system for obtaining *any* funding seems to work like a series of complex examinations with no-one ever knowing what is really required by the questions unless they have spent a lifetime in the public service.

The complete absence of certainty that an ongoing competent project will continue to be supported financially results in a continuous re-enforcement of disempowerment. This also reinforces complete dependence on the whims and decisions of faceless public servants. The result is that the public service functions frequently as a slave master with the control over the life and death of any project that is of real value to the Indigenous communities.

So one could say that behind the face of a Government Indigenous Languages policy lies a continuous thread of restrictions that provide unintentioned support for an ongoing disempowerment of Indigenous people's efforts to reclaim their cultural identities. This functions to force them to submit and admit defeat in the conquest of Australia that was all theirs before the British arrived.

8.2.4. Support for and effectiveness of the project in country communities

As noted above (section 7.3), significant transformations have been demonstrated in both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Wiradjuri country. We have been somewhat amazed at the levels of positive responses in communities and more than pleasantly surprised at the high regard that has been shown for the introduction of Wiradjuri in schools across much, though not all of, Wiradjuri country. Significant interest is being shown in learning the language in some schools by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

We have received reports regarding the positive effects on student attitudes, including the reduction of, and in some places abolition of, racism, and increased student achievements, not just in language studies but also in other school subjects. The reduction of racism is even extending into whole communities.

However I have heard of opposition in one NSW regional education office to any idea of Wiradjuri language being taught in "their schools" but there has been no way of verifying whether this is so or not, or whether these situations have been caused by personality clashes, racist attitudes or bad experiences. It is time that someone was given the authority to correct such offensive situations.

Attachment One: University, TAFEs, High Schools and Primary Schools Where Wiradjuri Language is Involved

In the beginning years of the project almost all teaching of the language was done by Stan Grant and myself. First this was done at weekends around Wiradjuri country and weekly with an evening class in an allocated unused school room in Canberra.

1. CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY

Discussion is happening between Charles Sturt University in Dubbo and Wagga with Wiradjuri area TAFEs and the Wiradjuri Council of Elders towards developing a diploma in Wiradjuri within the Education Faculty.

2. INSTITUTES OF TAFE

2.1. Narrandera TAFE was teaching Wiradjuri and was responsible for structuring the first TAFE certificate courses for Adults in the Riverina. Some of those graduates are now teaching in schools and High Schools. When the TAFE teacher moved to another location, the classes were cancelled.

2.2. Dubbo TAFE Western (02) 6883 3444
Myall Street, Dubbo **Wiradjuri Language Courses**
[redacted] is Head Teacher at Yarradamarra Indigenous Centre.
Courses in Wiradjuri have been developed at Certificate 1, 2, & 3 levels in TAFE.

[redacted] is teaching from Dubbo to Bathurst & Lithgow in Certificate One through TAFE Western Connect using Interactive white boards and video conferencing.
[redacted] is teaching Face to Face at Certificate One, Two, & Three in Dubbo and Certificate One at Wellington TAFE

[redacted] is teaching Wiradjuri at Certificate One level at TAFE Dubbo and Gamilaraay at Lightning Ridge and Goodooga.

3. SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

3.1. Dubbo College has three separate campuses catering for students from year 7 to year 12 in Dubbo Twenty five percent of the student population is Aboriginal.

South Campus, Phone: 02 6882 3744 Has an Aboriginal Education Officer ([redacted] Wiradjuri was being taught in 2010 and then 2011 Terms 1 & 2 but

teacher went on maternity leave. **South Campus** will be beginning Wiradjuri Instruction again 2012
Results: ([redacted] says) Children take pride in the language and use it outside of class in a happy way. They aren't ashamed of it. It makes them feel worthy and good for something. It is responded to by the elders.

Delroy Campus Phone: 6882 7955 Has two Aboriginal Education Officers ([redacted]) Beth Wright was teaching Wiradjuri in 1st Semester to years 7 & 8. but moved to TAFE. Wiradjuri classes are not planned for 2012.

3.2. Cowra High School Phone: 6342 1766

[redacted] (Aboriginal Education Officer) is involved in class rooms leading cultural activities. Wiradjuri, language is involved but only incidentally. There is a positive attitude towards its inclusion but at this stage no active teaching of the language is involved

3.3. Griffith : Wade High School Phone 6962 4022

[redacted] (Head of English Department)

[redacted] teaches Wiradjuri in this school. All year 7 are studying Wiradjuri, in year 8 two classes opted to continue for a second year, One class (of boys only) in Year 9 both Indigenous and non-Indigenous have opted to continue learning Wiradjuri for another year

Results: Wiradjuri is universally treated as part of the school . There has been an increase in confidence in all Indigenous students.

"We have use of welcomes to country in both school and public events given by the students. In some public events situations, an elder will give a welcome in English and then the students "Translate" that intention into a Wiradjuri language learned welcome. This is bringing a connection between the two generations in a respect situation which is strengthening both hope and pride in a restoration of identity for the Wiradjuri people with benefits to the whole wider community".

3.4. Narrandera, High School Phone (02) 6959 1744

Language Teacher is [redacted] who has done Cert 4 through TAFE

[redacted] links to the school under TAFE auspices and TAFE Funding. Stewart is a league player in local community team.

[redacted] (Aboriginal Education Officer) Now the young people have a pride in and an awareness of who they are and are no longer demoralised by others. When they are put down they are changing so they can come back with a sensible response that deflates the whole situation instead of using aggression.

(For full report, see Sections 7.3.4 and 7.3.5)

3.5. Parkes High School Phone 68621844

Parkes High was 2006 Board of Studies, Pilot Secondary School and began Program

in 2006

"There are 700+ student in the school and 120 of these are Indigenous. All Year 7 currently learn Wiradjuri. and Wiradjuri is embedded in Year 8 coursework. All students now have a greater awareness of both language and culture and a positive attitude towards these except 2 or three boys who have no respect for any other students or for the wider community and have been involved with Tirkandi Inabarra and hence the Attorney General's Department."

3.6. Tirkandi Inaburra Cultural and Development Centre

Director: [redacted]; Casework manager: [redacted]; Office: [redacted]
Plus Indigenous youth workers.

Tirkandi Inaburra Cultural and Development Centre is an Aboriginal community-run centre offering Aboriginal boys aged 12-15 a culturally-based residential program aimed at reducing future contact with the criminal justice system by strengthening the boys' cultural identity, self-esteem and resilience.

The NSW government provides funding for the centre through the Attorney General's Department.

[redacted] **senior,** Director of the Wiradjuri Language Reclamation Project and Wiradjuri Elder, is Teaching Language at the Centre.
[redacted] teaches art and some incidental language

4. Primary Schools

4.1.Dubbo South Public School 02 6884 2228

[redacted] teaching Kindergarten children and in 2012 will be teaching kinders and Year 1 Currently teaching counting, relationship terms and body parts as vocab and songs . The four Aboriginal AECG members from years 5 and 6 do a welcome to country at assembly.

RESULTS IN SCHOOL: "The children and teachers think it is great and the children just love it and get turned on to all their school work."

4.2. Dubbo North Public School 02 6882 4689

[redacted] is responsible for Aboriginal Education Teachers words, songs, counting and cultural stuff. "The kids love it, it's theirs and they are proud of it. It helps keeping them at school and they are at school more often.

4.3. Orana Heights Public School (Dubbo) Phone 02 6884 9188

Two trained teachers who have done certificates 1 and 2 in Wiradjuri are teaching the language informally in their own classrooms.

School has trained SRC in doing welcomes to country.

RESULTS IN SCHOOL: Is starting to have a positive effect on attitudes of the school community, but still needs to reach the wider community.

4.4. Buninyong Public (Dubbo) Phone 02 6884 9806??

Wiradjuri language is being taught The school is aiming to develop a whole school Wiradjuri language program. All classes are receiving specialised language lessons.

4.5. Forbes North Public School Phone:6852 2187

[redacted] deputy principal of Forbes North Primary School saw the possibilities of the language in her school while attending one of our workshops and when the State body was looking for a pilot school she, with support from [redacted], the principal, chose to volunteer as the pilot teacher for the trial, under the Board of Studies teaching language in their school starting with the children in her class. [redacted] is now moving to become Principal at Middleton Primary in Parkes.

Parkes NSW

Community Language Teachers in three schools are funded by Department of Education. Schools have to apply for funds annually. The three language teachers have been guided in their preparation and work by [redacted], the Deputy Principal from Parkes Public School. They have become so confident they have applied to Canberra University to train externally as teachers. At the time of writing this, all three of them have heard that they have been accepted.

4.6. Middleton Primary Phone: 6862 1999

[redacted] (Aboriginal Language Teacher) is teaching Wiradjuri to every class in school

4.7. Parkes Public Phone 68621867

[redacted] (Aboriginal Language Teacher) is teaching Wiradjuri to every class in the school

4.8. Parkes East Primary School (02) 6862 2021

[redacted]Aboriginal Language Teacher) is teaching Wiradjuri to every class in school

4.9. Parkes Christian School

[redacted] is teaching Wiradjuri in the school on one day each fortnight.

4.10. Peak Hill Central School 6869 1304

[redacted] is Aboriginal Education Officer

Over half of the children in school are Aboriginal with Aboriginal Learning Support Workers. There is use of Wiradjuri Songs in the school, but no formal instruction in 2011

4.11. Narromine Public School

[redacted] was teaching in year 2 and was popular but ceased for lack of funding. He is hoping to begin again in 2012 if funding can be found.

4.12. Wellington: St Mary's Catholic School

Phone 06845 1822

Catholic K-10 school in the Bathurst diocese with 220 students. It is situated in Wellington, [redacted] is teaching Wiradjuri in the school

ATTACHMENT TWO

This attachment is based on my personal experience living amongst the Yolngu in North East Arnhem Land between 1964 and 1977 and for approximately 17 months since then. These are relevant to Terms of Reference Four

4. Measures to improve education outcomes in those Indigenous communities where English is a second language.

In the 1960's English was a very much second language in Arnhem land, rarely used except when used to communicate with Europeans. However almost all children spoke the separate languages of each of their parents. Many of the Adults spoke five or more languages. It was nonsense to speak of English as a "second" language. English was learned in the situations where men and women worked in association with European or Polynesian staff in the towns. It was the relationships between the two groups of adults that generated the basis for the learning of English, In the school English was taught as a foreign language of instruction. The Indigenous people, both men and women were far more skilled at learning languages than were the majority of non-Indigenous mono-lingual white staff and learned English because of the relationships with the outsiders, rather than the other way around.

What I saw in Arnhem Land over a period of fifteen years was that when children were fluent in their mother tongue, they had more confidence to acquire English**.**

English began to be the language of the superior and of imposition in Yirrkala when in 1966 an appointed government school principal refused to use the children's indigenous names, which he could not pronounce, and insisted that every child must have an English name. In his position of power what he achieved also was a denigration of every child's identity and language. Some took the same names as liked Caucasian staff, others were given a list to choose from, and those who did not choose from the list had names given to them by the principal.

When they were deprived of their indigenous language and English was enforced, they were expected to communicate without competence and so were shamed. To be shamed in Aboriginal society was to be incapacitated, to lose self-confidence and to withdraw into helplessness.

This assault on the children and families came with the literal application of the assumptions of the educational and vocational benefits of ensuring English language competency without consideration of the community, without respect for the community's languages and without respect for the Indigenous people. School education then became a place of both oppression and suppression, the result was that attendance became more sporadic.

Response from the Consultant to the Wiradjuri Language Reclamation Project [John Rudder (M.A. Ph.D.)] under the direction of Stan Grant (AM), Director of the Project under the authority of the Wiradjuri Council of Elders.

That principal's approach mirrored the approach of most Australian "colonists" and "migrants" from 1788 up to the 1970s and had the same devastating effects on the community.

ATTACHMENT THREE.

Causative Factors behind the beginnings of the "Aboriginal Problem" and the effects of the "Solutions" applied.

1. In 1788 the people already occupying Australia were subjected to an invasion of their country by Britain. Often they were treated as completely ignorant savages, less than human by the bulk of the new arrivals.

Apart from a few individuals, most of the first to arrive, approximately 80% of whom were male prisoners, together with their guards were there to build a prison colony. Few had any education. They saw no buildings, no fences, no growing of food, no clothes apart from animal skins, no material signs of any civilization. They heard no recognizable "real" language and assumed that these were people of no value. The first solution applied was to treat them as of no consequence.

There appears to have been, and to still be in this country, an unstated assumption that came to Australia from Europe, that any people who control less material possessions are of a "lower status than me" and hence were also there to be made use of by any of higher status.

It took very little time therefore before the British, (mostly men without female partners) saw and took advantage of available Indigenous women.

2. The first relations between the British and the Indigenous people were based in total ignorance of the latter and the wrong assumptions of both parties. From the first beginnings of the invasion relationships between the two peoples were a mixed bag. Any positive relations depended more on the few British individuals with some integrity than upon the rest of the new arrivals. The courtesy and care shown by the Indigenous people to British explorers, settlers, convicts, and lost people, that are recorded throughout the early contact period demonstrate which group had the most integrity and strongest sense of being human. These latter appear to have been taken for granted by the new comers.

3. Australian history has been partially recorded. It appears to have been improper until close to the 1967 referendum to record the negative sides of the frontier and any who did could have been treated as "black-lovers". Until the formation of the Commonwealth in the early 20th century, massacres and abuse were common but rarely recorded with any specifics. It was commonly spoken, that the Indigenous people were a dying race but even with an abundance of help they didn't do it.

The usual government approach appears to have been based on another assumption something like, "We have a difficult problem to solve so we will

impose these solutions". Put a different way, "We have a problem, we are the best qualified to fix it." or "These people are a problem, **we** must solve it." Hidden behind this is a common human assumption that "We are the superior beings; all others are inferior to us". **As a result there appears to have been little consideration given to involving Indigenous people in sorting out "the problem" and as little thought to any consultation based on any other assumptions. In addition there appears to have been little thought given to empowering people to do anything unless it is done 'our' way.**

These attitudes still remain is some parts of Australia. The tactics changed slowly with governments involved, but there continued as Kevin Gilbert eloquently labelled it, "a rape of the soul so profound". This is partially explored in Peter Read's book aptly named with that quote.

The governments almost universally since have continued the assaults through ignorance, by simply not understanding Indigenous people, and largely taking advice from people who do not understand anything of the depths of the Indigenous peoples' intelligence nor their ways of thinking and continue to treat themselves as superior. Few non-indigenous people have ever understood the foundations upon which Indigenous understandings of the world are based, nor the depth of suffering and grief in whole Indigenous people groups across this entire country. This is understandable as a result of their experience of our governments ever-continuing provision of solutions that simply extend the abuse.

The results on the whole have demonstrated minimal results at enormous expense primarily because development projects have been imposed with inadequate or minimal consultation. Rarely have the recipients had opportunity to reveal what the real needs are. It will take more than agenda driven consultations with pre-determined solutions to bring true results.

The process of being involved with the Wiradjuri people has broadened my own (John Rudder's) understandings of the effects on Aboriginal people of the ongoing invasion and abuse. The destruction of identity, the deliberate destruction of the languages, the deliberate and ongoing theft of the basis of their economy, their land and their resources, the desperate abuse they still suffer and the well earned distrust of successive white and other intrusions. While the big apology of "Sorry" was given by the then Prime Minister, and accepted by the Indigenous Australians, there is not and cannot be full restitution, what can be returned should be returned and should be adequately funded.

Under these circumstances no-one should be surprised that a minimum of about one third of all Wiradjuri men are either in gaol or have been. As previous and present enquiries into deaths in custody have verified they are not even safe from destruction in there. This is a one step "nicer" way of solving the "problem" than murder, and to deal with those who have no desire to become non-indigenous and (putting it politely) it makes the women folk

more vulnerable to assimilation (or any other government policy) without their own men to care for them.

I and many others have attempted to do what we can, but "for lack of knowledge and resources" there are more failures than successes, though some successes have been profound. We are of the opinion that the Wiradjuri Language Reclamation/Restoration Project is proving to be successful.

Small vestiges of this country remain where the people groups were too far from the "civilized" centres for them to be easily able to be plundered. These were aided to survive almost invariably by the establishment of Christian Missions amongst them though the range of freedom to be themselves varied widely. In my own lifetime these remote communities have felt the incursions of the mining industry with governments assenting and profiting and now some are receiving token royalties. There has now begun a program initiated by Indigenous people, in scattered and largely still dis-enfranchised people groups to reclaim what was stolen from them. Everything now controlled by non-Indigenous people was originally stolen from them by force and threats, murder and havoc and more than a thousand recorded massacres.

The list of what was removed is long but includes; land, liberty, language, children, means of livelihood, self-esteem, and culture, with countless and uncounted individuals and families having also lost life itself.

May the present government and succeeding ones respond to the Australian Indigenous People with real justice instead of the mockery of the so-called solutions of the past and involve the senior Indigenous people openly in finding the best possible solutions instead of imposing more non-Indigenous solutions.