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THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

DEPT OF ANTHROPOLOGY, SCHOOL OF CULTURE, HISTORY AND LANGUGE
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House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities

Dear Commitee Members,

I am writing to you as a linguistic anthropologist with 36 years' experience working with Aboriginal people in the Kimberleys and helping them to document and preserve their languages. I wish to express my strong support and appreciation for the work that has been done along those lines by the Kimberley Language Resource Centre. Over the years I have worked with KLRC linguists (gratis) on three projects in which I have been asked to collaborate on account of my expertise in particular languages --- two involving Bunuba in Fitzroy Crossing and one involving Woorla in the East Kimberley. On each occasion I can attest that KLRC provided great support for the work, especially in the form of initial and follow-up consultation with the Aboriginal communities concerned, that the work was greatly appreciated by them, and produced materials that were of great value for use in the local schools.

Researchers based outside the region such as me may come and go, but in order for our work to made useful to the local communities it is essential to have organizations with a continuing presence in the region that can maintain continuing contact with those communities and develop a broadly based, comparative understanding of best practice in the area of language maintenance. In my experience KLRC is one of the best of them anywhere in Australia, and a great asset to Kimberley Aboriginal people.

I realize that this letter of support for the KLRC pertains to a only small portion of your committee's brief, but it is one which I have singled out for urgent attention because the KLRC is an organization whose work I know well, which has recently been hit by the threat of funding cuts, when in my view their work deserves more rather than less funding.

Yours sincerely,

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Alan Rumsey

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