CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY
Ellengowan Drive, Darwin, Northern Territory 0909
ABN 54093 513 649 | CRICOS Provider No. 00300K | RTO Provider No. 0373
cdu.edu.au

Submission to the Inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities

- Australian languages are the only languages in the world to have evolved over the millennia to engage specifically with Australian natural and cultural environments. Environmental management and the preservation of biodiversity currently and into the future will be greatly enhanced by the knowledge of Indigenous knowledge authorities who retain traditional languages and practices.
- The continued use of Australian languages in schools contributes to the possibilities or remote school leavers becoming employed in this natural resource management work on country.
- Australian languages in schools contribute to high attendance rates through bringing together school and community (particularly community elders, parents and grandparents). Low attendance rates in schools will only be solved by redressing the increasing dislocations between schools and the communities they serve. Celebrating and valuing Indigenous languages is a key strategy for this work.
- Through the Yolngu Studies program at Charles Darwin University, (which won the Prime Minister's prize for the best tertiary teaching program in Australia in 2005) over 1000 nonIndigenous students have enrolled in Aboriginal language courses since 1994. This has provided meaningful income to dozens of Yolngu involved as lecturers, consultants, and supervisors, as well as providing a deep insight in the traditional and contemporary worlds of Aboriginal people. Knowledge of languages allows public servants and other service providers to gain insights into Aboriginal cultures and protocols so they develop more appropriate policies and engage more effectively with Aboriginal peoples.
- Aboriginal languages have become key media for collaborative research addressing public problems such as education, health, housing, financial management etc in a collaborative, balanced way. See www.cdu.edu.au/yaci for a range of examples.

[redacted]
CH TY

Michael Christie
Professor of Education
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

John Greatorex
Coordinator Yolnu Studies
AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATION.
CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY.

31 August 2011

CHANGE YOUR WORLD