House of Representatives standing committee on aboriginal and Torres Strait islander affairs
Inquiry into language learning in indigenous communities

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What are the languages spoken in your community?

Pitjantjatjara is mainly spoken in Watarru, Pipalyatjara, Amata, Ernabella, Kenmore Park and Fregon.
Yankunytjatjara is the language spoken by the Elders in Indulkana and Mimili. Many of the young people now are speaking a mixture of Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara.

2. How well are they spoken by children, adults and elders?

The languages are spoken well by Elders in all communities; All the children in our schools speak the vernacular language as their mother tongue however many elders are concerned that the children and some adults are beginning to lose their language and are using incorrect grammar.

3. Describe your group and project:

We are a group of Anangu Coordinators working in nine schools in the APY lands District. We work in the following Schools:
Ernabella Anangu School was established in the 1930's by the missionaries who had a bi-lingual approach to education. This school was taken over by the SA Government in the early 1970s and continued to deliver a bi-lingual approach to education with Indigenous Education workers having an integral part in delivering education.
Fregon Anangu School: Fregon was established as an outstation of Ernabella Mission in the 1950's. The school continued the tradition of bi-lingual education.
Amata Anangu School was a government settlement and the school was established in 1968. Teachers followed a bi-lingual curriculum.
Indulkana Anangu School, Pipalyatjara Anangu School and the Mimili Anangu School were built in the 1970s and all had a strong bi-lingual approach. The Kenmore Park, Watarru and Murputja Anangu Schools have all been more recent ly developed.
During these years, each of these schools had strong literacy resource Centres at which community members were involved in writing books to be used in the schools.

In the late 80s, some teachers and Anangu voiced concerns that the children were not learning English well enough and they asked that the schools no longer be bi-lingual but English only. This was implemented for about 15 years with no apparent improvement in the student's ability in English literacy.

At this time, the Anangu Education workers were feeling very under valued in the schools with no teaching roles as Anangu language and culture were not being taught. Also they were concerned that the students were now not able to read and write in their own language and even more worrying, they were not speaking it correctly.
In 2001, some Anangu teachers voiced their concerns at a PYEC (Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee) meeting and it was decided that School Governing Councils could make the decision in each school as to whether the Anangu language and culture be taught in the schools curriculum.

PYEC have since made Anangu Language and Culture one of their main priority areas for schools in the district.

4. What activities do you do to record or encourage the use of languages, including local languages?

- Books in the Pitjantjatjara language have been published.
- Many texts, activities and other resources have been developed in digital form and can be accessed at the schools.
- Resources have also been developed in the language around the Child Protection Curriculum.
- SACE Units have been developed for the Senior Secondary students.
- Training has been delivered to AEWs so that they can better understand how their language works, and can learn how to plan and teach lessons.
- We have received funds to make a Children's dance DVD. We plan to produce books of the traditional stories introduced to the children in the different dances. The money for this has come from two sources and is being administered through CARCLEW.

5. How are your languages, including your local languages taught in school?

There are 9 schools in our district and each is different. Some ways that language is taught are:

- Anangu Teachers teach Pitjantjatjara language once a week to each class. (While teachers have non instruction time)
- AEWs in the classroom have regular time slots through the week when they teach language.
- Some AEWs are supported to plan and deliver language lessons across the school.
- Keeping Safe lessons are delivered by AEWs and resources in the language used.

6. What interpreting and translating services are available in your local languages? How useful and effective are they?

TAFE has trained several people in this area. However there are very few people who are fluent enough in both languages to give an effective service.

7. What are the main difficulties facing your project?

- **Schools need to be better funded to employ more AEWs.** Funding has been cut back drastically since 2009 which means the schools have to use other monies to fund this vital service.
- **A support teacher salary needs to be included in the staff ratio for Anangu Schools if AEWs and Anangu Teachers are to get the training and support they need to teach language and culture.**

8. What are you aiming to achieve in the future?

- C**hildren's dance DVD**

- At least 9 story books of traditional stories produced in Pitjantjatjara language

- Some of the books that we have produced in Pitjantjatjara to be translated into Yankunytjatjara for use in Yankunytjatjara speaking schools. These can also be used as comparative texts when studying language in the other schools.

- Some oral histories from Yankunytjatjara people to be written and produced for use at Yankunytjatjara schools.

- More regular training for all Anangu Teachers and AEWs around understanding how their language works and how to teach it.

- Support Teachers (linguists) in each school supporting AEWs and Anangu Teachers to plan and deliver Language lessons and to produce materials in the local language for use in the school.

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Terms of reference

The Committee will inquire into and report on Indigenous languages in Australia, with a particular focus on:

- The benefits of giving attention and recognition to Indigenous languages.

- The contribution of Indigenous languages to Closing the Gap and strengthening Indigenous identity and culture. (How does knowing the language help Close the Gap?)

Knowing language helps the children's sense of identity and belonging. "Without my language I lose my identity" Makinti Minutjukur.
We have seen other Indigenous people trying hard to get back their language and culture. Ours is still strong and we want to keep it this way. If we lose our language we will lose all our knowledge and understanding. Language connects us to the land and the dreaming "tjukurpa" We don't want to lose our souls.

- The potential benefits of including Indigenous languages in early education. (How might learning their own language help the young children in Family Centres, CPC and Reception?)

Kids love to hear stories in their own language. By hearing books read to them in their own language, they will learn to love books and literature. This way the children will be moving from known to unknown. Books can be made in their language about the children's family and community including photos. This will make the books more interesting.

- Measures to improve education outcomes in those Indigenous communities where English is a second Language. (What are we doing in our schools to make education better for our children?)

We have Anangu decision making through PYEC (Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee.) PYEC makes a 3 year plan for education in the district and schools write their yearly school plans based on this. One of the priority areas is Anangu language and culture
Each School also has a local governing council.
Anangu Coordinators are employed to work alongside the Principal in each school.
AnTEP through Uni SA supports the training of AEWs to become teachers.
An Accelerated Literacy Coordinator is based in Ernabella AES Office and visits all the schools in our district to ensure all the teachers of English are using best practice.

- The educational and vocational benefits of ensuring English language competency amongst Indigenous communities. (How will it help the students in our communities if they can learn to speak and read English well?)

We want our children to learn good English so that they can:

- Learn strong in School
- Enter university and study for a profession.
- Get good jobs
- Talk up strong at meetings and to government.

▶ Measures to improve Indigenous language interpreting and translating services.
TAFE offers a course for Anangu to get qualifications in this area.

▶ The effectiveness of current maintenance and revitalisation programs for Indigenous languages. (Are our students learning their language well enough now so that they don't lose it in the future?)
Some schools are doing better than others.
There is a need for:

- Regular lessons in every class (JP and Primary classes should have at least 3 lessons a week)
- A support teacher in each school to support the AEWs to plan, deliver and assess lessons.
- More funds for each school to employ more AEWs
- Regular training for AEWs

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

The Committee welcomes further comments from you about your project or on any or all of the Inquiry's terms of reference. Please find the Terms of Reference overleaf and note that the Committee may use this information in preparing its report and making recommendations to the Government.

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