

# Kiraman Indigenous Languages and Culture Consultancy.

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## **Board member of:**

|                                                          |         |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Queensland Indigenous Languages Advisory Committee       | QILAC.  |
| New South Wales Aboriginal Languages Advisory Committee. | NSWALAC |
| Australian Indigenous Languages Authority                | AICA.   |

**Consultant.** Consultant DIMIA Indigenous Community Projects.

**Member** of Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages.  
Member of Kumbumerri Aboriginal Corporation for Culture.

## **Project Management.**

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|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| National Indigenous Languages Survey.                          | AIATSIS/ FATSIL/DCITA |
| Guide to Community Protocols for Indigenous Language Projects. | FATSIL 2004           |
| Model Contracts for Indigenous Language Projects.              | FATSIL 2004           |

The aim of this submission is to propose strategies for the delivery of Backing Indigenous Ability, working through an existing network of Indigenous Language and Cultural Centres that operate within Indigenous communities around the country.

These Indigenous managed centres, which in many cases also fill the role of museums or keeping places for their communities, have been established in 35 locations to date. They have dedicated staff, but minimal services currently available. They offer an ideal location for the distribution of the services referred to in this discussion paper, while meeting the criteria for Backing Indigenous Ability.

Most importantly, the provision of appropriate telecommunications and internet services is known to allow communities to maximize the benefits of any funding they do receive, by greatly increasing the scope of the achievements possible in an under-resourced environment.

**This submission will discuss the following points.**

- 1. The role of Indigenous Language and Culture Centres.**
- 2. Language Centres as Community Hubs.**
- 3. List of proposed outcomes from BIA and Language Centres linkup**
- 4. Case outline: North Queensland Regional Aboriginal Language Centre.**
- 5. Specific services required.**
- 6. Addressing the 5 key elements.**
- 7. Recording and archiving of culturally significant material.**
- 8. Scoping survey for development of appropriate content.**
- 9. Discussion Paper Questions. Brief notes.**
- 10. Recommendations.**

## **1. The role of Indigenous Language and Culture Centres.**

Indigenous Language and Culture Centres have been established in all states of Australia and the Northern Territory. Their role is to provide a focus for the community for recording, reviving, teaching and preserving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Most of these centres operate with a small amount of grant funding that is distributed through the Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records program within DCITA. As most of the Indigenous Languages in Australia are considered to be endangered, the focus of the work of these centres has been on recording the languages while the community still has any of the original speakers. The preservation of and supported use of traditional language is known to produce significant social benefits for Indigenous communities.

## **2. Language Centres as Community Hubs.**

It is inherent in the role of the language and culture centres, that they are seen as community hubs. They are not places that individuals need a specific purpose to attend, (such as health services, legal etc) In fact at some time all community members will find themselves hearing of or being directly invited to attend an activity at one of these centres. They are at all times open to community as they are the keeping place of shared community knowledge.

## **2. List of proposed outcomes from BIA and Language Centres linkup.**

Upgrading the provision of appropriate technology in community language and culture centres stands to vastly enhance the outcomes currently achieved. Listed are some of obvious and easily achieved outcomes;

- Facilitating the means for communities to access knowledge about their languages and culture,
- Improving the efficiency of basic language recording procedures,
- Supporting the development of quality teaching resources,
- Assisting the development and provision of community language teaching programs,
- Supporting the sharing of information and resources between communities throughout Australia,
- Providing access to information on the latest program developments from overseas,
- Supporting interaction with international language communities.
- Ensuring that existing teaching programs are accessible to many more community members than is currently possible,
- Improving the uptake of language and culture by Indigenous children and youth,
- Supporting the development of innovative computer and web-based programs relevant to language and cultural recordings.
- Facilitating the safe recording and archiving of culturally significant material.
- Providing a focus for new training and skills development within communities.

#### **4. Case outline: North Queensland Regional Aboriginal Language Centre.**

The North Queensland Regional Aboriginal Language Centre is in the Herbert River/ Ingham area. It operates with minimal funding and supports a Project Officer, a language teacher and a language project worker.

The Language Centre services 43 dialects around the Townsville area, representing thousands of community members.

This Centre does not have internet or email services. To reach people in outlying areas, the project team has been working to develop a mobile unit, where staff can travel out to community to support the reclamation and teaching of languages.

Most of these 43 language groups are struggling to record word lists and compile dictionaries in the face of the loss of a dwindling number of elders with knowledge of the languages.

This situation is repeated throughout Australia.

Clearly the proposals within the Backing Indigenous Ability could be most effective in producing highly desirable outcomes for this group of communities.

#### **5. Specific services required.**

Specifically, the language centres stand to achieve significantly improved outcomes through the provision of:

- Additional telephone services,
- Shared community phones,
- Mobile telephony,
- New equipment for Internet access
- Equipment for recording audio/video
- Public Internet access
- Videoconferencing facilities.
- Training and support
- Development of appropriate content

#### **6. Addressing the 5 Key Elements.**

The work being undertaken by people in language centres is currently inspired by a passionate desire to preserve culture. It is being done in the face of minimal support and infrastructure, but continues regardless, with unflagging energy by the community members involved. There is no question that the injection of these new resources and services into the community language programs will provide immediate short term and long term benefits for all.

**Services** can be immediately applied as listed in item 5

**Engagement:** Language centres act as meeting places and regularly call together community members for information and training.

**Content development:** This has been identified in all communities. The content is available and lacking only adequate resourcing, equipment and training to be fully developed.

**Training and support:** The provision of appropriate training will assist with the update of the new services as well as contributing to skills development that will carry over to other areas of achievement for the communities involved.

**Sustainability:** This will obviously be within the realm of the Government as funding authority for the services provided. However, in terms of relating funding to output, it is believed that the outcomes to be achieved through the provision of the services proposed will satisfy the requirements of long term sustainable benefits for the communities involved.

## **7. Recording and archiving of culturally appropriate material.**

Indigenous languages are to their communities the cornerstone of cultural knowledge. In recognizing the suitability of language as material to be adapted for content through Backing Indigenous Ability, the opportunity and responsibility also exists to support innovative programs that are being developed to record and preserve in a culturally appropriate manner.

Through the network of language centres, information is being exchanged about the development of web-based software that will greatly expand the capabilities of small language programs to record and teach languages. These new programs must also address the protocols that will be applied by individual communities relating to access to specific information by only limited persons, and sharing of more general content.

Recording projects cover a broad range that includes:

- Taping and videoing of individual language speakers.
- Recording community meetings.
- Converting archival tapes of language recordings to more durable formats, such as Cds and inclusion in multimedia resources.
- Developing new CD roms, and multimedia language teaching resources. These programs support the production of word lists, dictionaries, books, and multi-level language teaching programs on-line.
- Digital mapping projects, which incorporate audio and visual records from within a region with historical information databases, producing interactive touch screen displays for educational and promotional purposes.

## **8. Scoping survey for development of appropriate content.**

In view of the points raised above, and knowing of the variety of content that is being constantly developed in relation to Indigenous language programs both in Australia and overseas, it would seem worthwhile to undertake a survey of the extent of the material available to determine the most appropriate way to support development of appropriate online content.

## **9. Discussion Paper Questions. Brief notes.**

Q2. Long term sustainability. By ensuring that where services are provided, they are linked to people and activities that support the development of skills, knowledge, community awareness and educational opportunities within the communities.

Q 4. Regional agents and ICCs. This should be expanded to include other key Indigenous organisations such as FATSIL, Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages, AIATSIS Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, AICA Australian Indigenous Communications Association, National Indigenous Arts Organisations and respondents to this discussion paper where appropriate.

Q. 5. Application process. Before any application process is implemented, ICCs and appropriate peak bodies should be engaged to help inform communities about the services about to be offered to make sure that the uptake is used to its best benefit.

Q.7. Hub communities as the appropriate location. Serious consideration should be given to using Indigenous Language and Culture Centres as hub communities where they are available.

Q. 8 see question 4.

Q. 9 see question 5.

Q. 12. PC-based webcam. Both these and the more sophisticated video conferencing equipment would be well utilised through the language centres, with teachers and language speakers engaging one to one and through group conferencing.

Q. 13. Low use of videoconferencing. Training and support in the use of the equipment. Also a contributing factor is the limited number of people who also have the equipment to allow for communication.

Q. 14 see question 4.

Q. 16 see question 5.

Q. 18. This could be the subject of a study, once the appropriate model has been identified for the establishment of hubs.

Q. 20 see question 5

Q. 27. Culturally appropriate material. A scoping survey could be undertaken to establish the range of material that is available. This should involve ICCs who can advise on the services and resources within a region, peak bodies as listed above, and major service providers Health, Education, Welfare etc.

Q. 28 Grant or funding model. On the basis of the findings of a survey of appropriate content, applications could be invited for grants to targeted areas of need. However it would be important to have an idea of the type of material required and which will have the most widespread application before decisions are made on the allocation of grant funding.

Q. 29. Digital Recording and archiving. It is already well established that the ability to digitally record and archive culturally significant material is having a major impact on the use of internet services for Indigenous communities involved in language revival and preservation.

Q. 30 See question 5.

Q. 41 Acceptance and ownership of telecommunications technology. Appropriate information sharing and consultation in preparation for the new services will encourage the uptake and ongoing use of the services.

Q. 42. Best Practice.

Yarnteen in Newcastle. Arwarbukarl Cultural Resource Association. Newcastle. Ph. 02 4961 0515

This organisation has been actively involved in the development and training of computer skills programs for Indigenous community members. They are also engaged in developing computer software programs for language teaching.

Q. 51. Other key stakeholders.

FATSIL Federation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages.

AIATSIS Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

AICA Australian Indigenous Communications Association.

Incorporating a whole of Government approach. The Dept. of Education Science and Training has called for a tender to investigate the current provision of Indigenous language programmes in schools. Information from this survey when completed could be useful in identifying and supporting communities where language centre staff are working with children in schools and could take great advantage of improved telecommunications.

DCITA has produced the National Indigenous Languages Survey Report 2005. This contains an overview of current needs for services within Indigenous communities that would be informative to this discussion.

## **10. Recommendations.**

R.1. That Indigenous Language and Culture Centres within Indigenous communities be considered as appropriate community hubs where they exist throughout the country.

R.2 That a scoping survey be undertaken to investigate the range of material available that could be considered to be culturally appropriate for content development. That from this survey, content is called for in a range of identified areas related to culture, language, art, entertainment, health and education services.

R. 3 That Indigenous Languages Centres be identified as key areas that will benefit from/ are in urgent need of the "Recording and Archiving of culturally sensitive material"